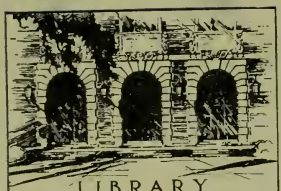

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A WOMAN'S TRIALS.

VOL. II.

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A WOMAN'S TRIALS.

BY

GRACE RAMSAY.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

HENRIETTA'S eyes kept wandering to the clock on the mantel-piece; a quarter past nine, and not come yet.

"Dear Henrietta!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, clutching her tightly by the wrist.

"Oh, you hurt me," said the young girl, testily. "What's the matter?"

"He's come!" whispered Miss Lavinia, in a thrill of excitement. "Who's that with him, I wonder?"

Henrietta looked towards the door, and saw Monsieur Béranger in the act of presenting a gentleman to Madame St. Simon. The presented party bowed so low, that for a moment his head and shoulders were eclipsed by the portly figure of the hostess.

But Henrietta had no need of the testimony of her eyes to vouch for his identity. She remained perfectly still, and apparent-

ly unconcerned in what was going on before her. No one but Milly Jackson noticed that the blood rushed fiercely to her neck and face, leaving her very pale a moment after.

Milly was not a bad friend, as she said herself, and fancying her vicinity might be a sort of shield to Henrietta, she left her place, and walked across to Miss Wilson, scattering the gentlemen to make way for her.

"Miss Lavinia," she began, addressing the governess, with a serio-comic face, "the room will be strewn with corpses before the night is out!"

"What does Miss Jackson mean?" And Miss Lavinia turned to Henrietta, with an air of intense disgust.

"Miss Jackson means," replied Milly, "that the gentlemen are fit to strangle themselves in their white cravats, all about those curls *à la Sévigné*. I call it very unfair, Miss Laventine," and Milly tossed her head, and played with her fan, keeping her eye meantime on the two gentlemen near Madame St. Simon.

"Monsieur le Vicomte est trop aimable,"

the lady was asserting, in a voice rather louder than was necessary for good taste.

"Law! he's a viscount!" echoed Miss Lavinia, in a reverent *sotto voce*.

"And the thing has only two legs!" whispered Miss Jackson, opening her eyes incredulously.

"Milly!" chided Henrietta.

"I wonder if the Vicomte will dance?" said Miss Lavinia.

"I wonder will somebody else dance?" returned Milly, with a sly look at the governess.

"Oh, my! oh, my!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, putting her hand to her head, "I believe my back hair is coming down! For gracious sake, look and tell me."

Milly looked, and pronounced the back hair "all serene;" it was only an unruly curl that had broken loose, and slipped down on her neck.

"They're going to ask Miss Stanhope to dance!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, with more vehemence than the fact seemed to warrant.

"Do you mean old Béranger or the Viscount?"

"Well, I never!" protested Miss Lavinia, turning a scornful look on the young lady.

"The Viscount has the best legs of the two," Milly went on composedly; "in fact they are the only decent pair present. What awful spindles French legs are!"

Henrietta kept quietly watching the new comers moving about the room.

Of course Monsieur de Perronville would not venture to come towards her just yet, or ask her to dance, till he had gone through the ceremony with some of her companions. She was prepared for that; and yet when the two gentlemen stopped before Mabel Stanhope, and were answered by a slight inclination of the head and a few inaudible words, Henrietta felt decidedly aggrieved, which was absurd, because the hussar must dance with some one first; still, if he had selected Miss Lavinia, or that awkward Jemima Long, it would have been much more proper of him. But it was Monsieur Béranger's fault, bringing him up to Mabel; of course he had no choice but to ask her.

The waltzers were soon flying round

the room, sending a hat flying here and there with their ample skirts; but Henrietta only saw one couple in the crowd—a tall figure in black, and a slight, fair one in white. When Miss Lavinia had called Mabel haughty, Henrietta thought it a mistake, and said so; but she was beginning to understand what Miss Lavinia meant; probably the governess was right. Mabel did look haughty, with that stately head bending forward under its golden circlet, looking as if she knew no girl in the room could compare with its beauty. Such affectation, too, twisting up her hair in that school-girl fashion, and wearing a plain white muslin frock! As much as to say she was too beautiful to want any help from dress. Henrietta thought it showed very bad taste on Mabel's part. Oddly enough, this had not struck her till now; but she grew more and more alive to it as she sat watching that round, white arm resting on the black coat.

The dancers paused to take breath, Monsieur de Perronville supporting his partner on his arm.

"Time for them to stop," Henrietta

muttered pettishly. "Off again! well, I do call it most unladylike of Mabel."

Henrietta forgot to look at the time-piece when the dance began, or she would have seen it had not lasted quite four minutes.

Milly was being reeled about by one of the music-masters.

Miss Lavinia was still doing *tapisserie* beside Herietta.

"It is awfully slow," observed Miss Lavinia to her neighbour.

"Miss Stanhope doesn't seem to think so," replied Henrietta, flinging back Mabel's sash that flew up against her face. The ribbon was simply tied into a bow, and Henrietta's angry jerk unfastened it.

"Permettez-moi, Mademoiselle," cried Monsieur de Perronville, catching eagerly at the blue streamer that had entangled itself between his feet; "we soldiers are rather clever at making bows," and he passed the ribbon round her waist, tying it into a loop before Mabel had unbuttoned her glove.

"I call that very prettily done," said Miss Lavinia, as Mabel, rather conde-

scendingly bowed her thanks, and escaped to a chair in the corner.

"I call it perfectly disgusting," retorted Henrietta contemptuously.

"Well, I think she is a bit of a flirt," assented Miss Lavinia, "but it's hard to be a beauty without it."

"Beauty is a matter of taste, so is flirtation," remarked Henrietta drily.

"There's the Viscount talking to Madame," whispered Miss Lavinia, nudging her companion; "they're coming this way," and she commenced operations with her fan and her pocket-handkerchief.

Henrietta's colour came and went, but she meditated on the lustre, counting the lights for the fifteenth time, and wondering whether Adrien would muster courage to ask her to dance, or pass on to some one else. They were close by her now.

"Ma petite Henriette, vous ne dansez pas?" exclaimed Madame St. Simon, laying her hand caressingly on the girl's shoulder, "voulez-vous que je vous trouve un danseur? Monsieur le Vicomte, do me the pleasure to invite Mademoiselle for the

next dance." And the smiling hostess passed on to do duty elsewhere.

Henrietta was conscious of a sudden blaze of light in the room, and of a pair of fiery grey eyes bent upon her; they were muttering something about "l'honneur, Mademoiselle;" and she had no recollection of anything further, till she felt herself borne along by a strong arm through the maze of dancers.

Miss Lavinia looked with envious eyes after the pair, and thought to herself that Monsieur le Vicomte's graceful steps would have shown to much greater advantage had she been his partner instead of that lackadaisical school-girl. He was most likely going to ask her if Madame St. Simon had not interfered.

But what did Monsieur Béranger mean? He had not even spoken to her since his arrival. She began to suspect Madame St. Simon had noticed his attentions, and was jealous of them. Nothing else could account for his extraordinary conduct. He had not joined in the dancing yet, but went from one to another of his pupils, chatting pleasantly.

The waltz ended, Monsieur de Perronville led Henrietta back to her seat. He had not dared to say more than a few whispered words to her, lest he should attract observation; but Henrietta was supremely happy. The excitement had given a brilliancy to her eyes and a colour to her cheeks that changed the whole expression of her face, so cold and sullen a few minutes ago.

"Who does that *tête impossible* belong to?" inquired Monsieur de Perronville, as he bowed his pretty partner to her seat next the governess, and stood for a moment playing with his hat.

"To Miss Laventine, our English teacher; you'll ask her to dance, will you not?"

"Barbare!" murmured the young officer in a reproachful tone, examining very intently the maker's name in his hat.

"To please me, Adrien!"

"C'est demander le pistolet à la gorge," replied Adrien, picking up his glove that had dropped, accidentally, at Henrietta's feet.

The musicians struck up a quadrille. Since he must execute himself with that

tête impossible, a *partie carrée* was better than a tête-à-tête.

"Will Mademoiselle do me the honour to present me to her friend?" he said to Henrietta, loud enough for Miss Lavinia to hear him.

Henrietta did him the honour; and the gentleman then asked Miss Lavinia for the honour of her hand in the quadrille, which Miss Lavinia, nothing loth, conceded.

Miss Wilson congratulated herself on having so far secured a safe partner for Adrien. If he would dance next with one of those ugly Flemmings, that would be very satisfactory. Then, perhaps, he might venture to ask her again. How singular that she should be the only one to whom Madame St. Simon introduced him! Henrietta thought it a good omen.

Olga, apparently, did not recognize the hussar; it was several months since she had seen him for a moment in the Madeleine, and then he was in uniform.

Poor Miss Lavinia was beside herself with delight, in spite of Monsieur Béranger's desertion. Indeed that rather gave a stimulus to her enjoyment; and she was

glad to show the faithless professor that younger and handsomer men were ready to dispute the prize with him.

Monsieur de Perronville talked a great deal to her—told her she spoke French *à merveille*, and wished he could learn English from so charming a mistress; upon which, Miss Lavinia called him a flatterer, and shook her curls *à la Sévigné*, till a refractory rose-bud escaped from bondage, and dropped on her partner's arm. Monsieur de Perronville seized the flower, vowing that nothing on earth would induce him to give it up, whereupon Miss Lavinia nearly expired with delight.

"What in the Saints' name possessed you to fall a victim to that rusty old piece of artillery, *mon cher?*" inquired Monsieur Béranger when Adrien joined him after the quadrille.

"Ma foi!" replied the hussar, "I thought I might as well go in for it at once; the creature would have ogled me down before the evening was out. But she's capital fun, I assure you."

"I don't doubt it; still you had courage to undertake her."

"She keeps firing a random shot at you, every now and then," observed Monsieur de Perronville; "you'll be brought down presently, Monsieur le Professeur."

"Allons donc!" laughed Monsieur Béranger, good-humouredly, and strengthened himself with a pinch of snuff.

The hussar left him, and claimed another waltz from Henrietta as a reward for his *dévouement*.

Notwithstanding his pupil's prognostications, Monsieur Béranger escaped unharmed from Miss Lavinia's cannonading. At half-past eleven he came to speak to Madame St. Simon, who was seated near Miss Lavinia, and said a few words which Miss Lavinia did not catch; but Madame's answer she did catch.

"If that be the case," the hostess was saying, "I must let you go. You will tell Madame Béranger how sorry I was not to see her; we are unfortunate in never being able to have her amongst us."

"My wife feels the disappointment more than you do, I assure you," replied the gentleman emphatically; "she quite counted on being able to come with me,

but this dreadful neuralgia is so treacherous!"

Miss Lavinia heard no more. She sat absolutely petrified.

The Professor turned to wish her good night, but she glared at him stupidly, and then struggling out of the *salon*, rushed to the little garret room, where, some short time ago, sorrow of a different kind found vent in tears less fruitless, less bitter, than those Miss Lavinia shed over her disappointed vanity.

It was a cruel blow to the matrimonial candidate, but, to do her justice, Miss Lavinia bore it bravely. She had been used to such warfare, and her heart had many a scar to show after its campaigns, so that it was now, to a certain extent, fire-proof.

No one knew of the conversation she had overheard, and the unconscious object of her indignation was not likely to be seen at Belle-Vue. Madame Béranger was, as her husband said, a martyr to neuralgia, and seldom left her own apartment.

Miss Lavinia had no reason to suspect Miss Jackson of having intentionally de-

ceived her in the matter, and in this she was right. Milly did not know the Professor was a married man; she had given the governess to believe he was looking for a wife, not with any preconceived idea of deceiving the foolish woman, but from that uncontrollable love of a "lark" which would have led her into any other absurdity.

Monsieur de Perronville had been invited to the two *soirées* which followed his first introduction to the school. Madame St. Simon had taken the dashing officer into high favour; he had grown quite at home with her, and praised or criticized her pretty pupils with well-bred impertinence; Miss Jackson was *piquante*, Miss Wilson *intéressante*, Miss Stanhope *adorable de grace et de beauté*.

"Take care of your heart, *cher vicomte!*" said the lady in playful warning, as Monsieur de Perronville scattered his compliments, and curled his moustache.

"I have placed it in safe keeping," answered the hussar, lowering his voice, and bowing a declaration to Madame St. Simon.

"Flatteur!" chided the hostess, with an indulgent smile, a tinge of womanly embarrassment softening the hard expression of her face. "Go and dance with some of my children, instead of talking nonsense to me. There is *l'intéressante*, as you call her, waiting for a partner."

And so, cleverly enough, Monsieur de Perronville threw the dragon off her guard.

CHAPTER II.

MANY months had passed since the pretty Polish girl's attempt to discover Alexandre, and consult him on the subject of her mother's health.

She had received cheering letters from Galicia, telling her that all immediate danger was passed, but that Madame Czerlinska was likely to remain a confirmed invalid. At first, Olga accepted the sentence gratefully and joyfully. But by degrees, when the reaction from intense anxiety to comparative happiness had passed away, the old hankering after the wizard returned.

They had his address now, and there was no fear of Miss Lavinia's standing in the way by any conscientious scruples as to the folly or danger that might attend a visit to the fortune-teller. So one bright morning, a party consisting of Miss La-

vinia, Olga, Milly Jackson, and one of the Miss Flemmings, set out to have their fortunes told.

The oracle held his court in a narrow street off the Boulevard Montmartre. It was a dismal-looking house outside, with a gloomy, hang-dog door; not standing half way open, after the manner of respectable *portes-cochères* in Paris, but shut all day long, except when the clanging of the bell brought a responsive jerk from the *concierge* to tell the visitor he might push open the door and come in.

The four girls and their *chaperon* rang twice before the jerk responded. Then the three foremost put their shoulders to the ponderous panel, and slowly swang it back on its hinges.

"Fermez la porte!" growled Cerberus from his den.

The three girls obeyed meekly.

"Qui cherchez-vous?" was the next salutation, and the man put his head to the lodge window.

"Monsieur Alexandre, Monsieur," replied Miss Lavinia.

"Rez-de-chaussée, au fond de la cour,"

grunted Cerberus, collapsing into darkness.

They crossed the court-yard as directed. There was only one door; it bore no cabalistic sign to announce the occupant's calling; but Miss Lavinia rang courageously.

The summons was answered by an old woman with a hump and a squint, looking a witch from head to foot; no benign fairy, promising tall, dark husbands and a coach-and-four, or kindly warning the young sooth-seekers against "a fair young man that meant no good," but an envious, evil-eyed witch.

She asked no questions, but held the door open till the five ladies had passed in, and then turning the key in the massive lock, closed it.

They were now in total darkness, and began to quake and wonder how they were to get out again, and wish themselves anywhere but where they stood.

The old woman, in a cracked voice that sounded unearthly to the already excited imaginations of the girls, asked if they had come to consult her master.

Miss Lavinia was too frightened to answer, but grasped the arm of some-

body next her. It was Milly Jackson. Awed in spite of herself, but less faint-hearted than her companions, Milly replied,

"Yes; we have come to have our fortunes told."

Then the old woman turned another key that hung by her side, in a door of the vestibule, bade them follow her, held the door till the five had passed in, and then turning the key with a wrench, let it drop again by her side.

The room was lighted by one window, guarded outside by a high iron railing, and inside by a dark red curtain drawn right across it. There was another dark red curtain at the opposite end of the room, and behind this the old woman disappeared.

"I hope we may get away without being murdered," whispered Miss Lavinia.

"It's not very jolly," remarked Milly Jackson in the same under-tone, but trying to keep up an appearance of bravery.

In about five minutes, the old woman emerged from behind the dark red curtain, holding in her hand a lantern.

"The master is ready, and will see you," she croaked. "Who goes first?"

"Can we not go together, *bonne mère?*" asked Milly, with concialiting civility.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the hag; whether it was the question or the appellation that evoked the hideous yelp, Milly could not guess; but feeling they were now in for it, and that escape was impossible, she said composedly:

"I will go first then."

"Passez," said the woman, holding back the dusty serge.

Milly passed under it, and followed her guide down a flight of stone steps; they could hardly see their way by the dull light of the lantern.

"Hold on by the wall," cautioned the hunch-back; "there was a gentleman broke his leg here two days ago."

Milly did as she was told, and reached the bottom of the stairs with her legs unbroken. They were underground now, a fact which did not add to the pleasurable sensations of the moment. She might have been murdered ten times over, and her shrieks would have died away in the vaults before they could reach a human ear.

"What, in mercy's name, ever brought

me here?" thought Milly, as she watched the old woman fix another key in another door, where she was going to be locked up again, probably this time with the blue-beard of the place.

"*Entrez*," said the crowl, holding up her lantern, and staring hard at Milly; "*entrez*, and when you want to come out, you'll knock so;" and she struck her knuckles against the door.

Before Milly had realized where she was, her guide had vanished, and again the key grated in the lock. The room was low, and bare of all furniture, except two oak chairs placed side by side in the centre. Skeletons of men and animals, snakes and other grim devices painted on the walls, were visible by the light of an oil-lamp that hung from the ceiling. No amount of sunshine could have made the picture cheerful; but alone, in that lurid darkness, it was alive with supernatural horror. The skeletons grinned and danced with every flicker of the struggling flame, till Milly almost fancied they were going to start off the walls and seize her in their horrible embrace.

For once in her life she was thoroughly sobered, and clung to the back of one of big oak chairs in breathless suspense, a prayer throbbing on her lips. She had not been alone more than a minute, though it seemed an hour, when something at the end of the room began to move. Slowly, and without the aid of any visible hand, a curtain or screen was drawn upwards, and Milly found herself in the presence of the necromancer. He was a small, thin man, dressed in a flowing black gown, covered with hieroglyphics and cabálistic emblems, worked in divers colours.

The inevitable long white beard, without which a wizard would be no wizard, fell upon his breast, and completed the imposing effect of his appearance. The awe-struck visitor believed as implicitly in his beard as she did in his science, and, judging from its growth, reverently concluded the oracle to be the oldest as well as the wisest of men. On the table before him was a tripod, from which rose a clear blue flame that shed a vivid phosphorescent light over the scene. It was a welcome relief to the tomb-like darkness.

"Come forward, my daughter, and have no fear," said he of the beard, in a voice that sounded inappropriately human and encouraging.

Milly advanced to the table.

"Hold out your hand, that I may read the future in its lines."

Milly did as he desired.

The wizard examined the outstretched palm, muttering meanwhile to himself some words in a language unknown to his votary.

"Let me see your writing," he said, placing a pen in her hand, and opening a blank book beside him.

Miss Jackson wrote in a firm hand:—"Promettez-moi un bel avenir."

The old man smiled as he read the words, and then gazed long and fixedly into the girl's face.

All fear had left it, and though Milly was still conscious that the proceeding was anything but jolly, her features had regained their usual composure and almost all their brightness.

"You come from afar, daughter," said the seer, resuming his scrutiny of the hand,

and speaking in measured sentences, "and the past promises well for the future. No sorrow has so far darkened your path. The clouds are still a great way off. I see no threat of coming storm till ten year's hence, and then, mayhap, it will break away in rain. There is a voyage before you soon, and then a change."

"A marriage, Monsieur?" inquired Milly, interrupting the sooth-sayer.

"Even so, my daughter; before the sun has risen six hundred times, the stranger with the golden horn and the snorting steed will carry away his bride, and the mother will mourn over her empty dove-cot. So much may I say, and no more;" and the wizard waved his hand majestically, in sign of dismissal.

"Oh! just do tell me," pleaded Milly, eagerly, "have I seen him yet?"

"No, maiden, your eyes have never rested on his face," answered the fortune-teller, again motioning her away. She was forced to obey, as the screen was now slowly descending over her head. She knocked at the door, as the old woman had

desired her, and was led back by the same lugubrious route.

The result of her interview had been pleasant and satisfactory beyond her best expectations.

Before six hundred suns had set—that made not quite two years—she was to be married. The voyage meant going home of course.

How extraordinary that the wizard should have guessed she was a foreigner, though she had not opened her lips. The golden horn meant that her husband would be rich.

They were now at the parlour door, and Milly, flushed and elated, brushed aside the curtain, nearly capsizing the old crowl in her excitement.

"Oh! he's a wonderful man, a real witch!" she cried, as the four watchers gathered round her, impatient to hear what she had heard and seen. "He told me nearly everything that happened to me—I mean that didn't, and that I am to get such a rich husband on a snorting steed; I wonder what that means?"

"It seems he's to be an officer in the

Cavalry," explained Miss Lavinia. "Law! how nice!"

"Such a jolly old fellow!" continued Milly; "but I nearly died with fright before I got to him. If it had been one of you cowards, you'd never have come back to tell it! Down a flight of steps where a gentleman broke his leg, and devils dancing on the wall. I nearly died; but he's the best of old fogeys, when you get to him."

"How long am I to wait while you keep on jabbering?" demanded the hag querulously.

"I'll not go by myself; nothing would induce me," protested Olga.

"Neither will I," said Henrietta. "You must let us go two together this time," she said, turning to the woman, "or else we won't go at all."

"It will be five francs more for that," replied the hunchback sharply.

"I'll pay it," said Henrietta, handing her the extra fee.

Holding each other tightly by the hand, the girls followed the old woman to the door of the mysterious council-chamber,

where they were duly locked up. Milly was right; they would never have lived to tell the tale, had either of them ventured alone into the ghostly precincts. Forewarned as they were, it was horrible enough. A cold chill ran over them as they stood, hardly daring to glance at the dancing devils as Milly had called the grinning death's-heads and gaunt figures on the wall.

Presently the screen rose up, and they beheld the reader of the stars.

"What would you learn that my poor wisdom may teach you?" he asked in the soft voice that had acted so soothingly on Milly.

"Our fate," replied Henrietta, timidly, but somewhat reassured.

"Advance, my daughter, and I will answer you at my best," said the seer.

Henrietta was desired to give a specimen of her writing. Whether with the idea of detecting in the words any clue to her character, or because it came easier to her to write in English, she traced the following lines in a nervous but legible hand.

"Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still;
Is human love the growth of human will?"

The wizard scanned the writing long and carefully; then turning his scrutiny on the writer, looked steadily into her face. The blue eyes fell under the searching glance. There was something hidden in their depths that she did not wish him to read. Perhaps the curtain dropped too late; the drooping lids may have told what they sought to hide.

"I see," said the oracle, examining the white palm extended to him, "I see a bark at sea, and in it a boatman . . . . tall and dark, beckoning to a figure on the shore. The figure is that of a maiden, fair and young; beside her is a sleeping dragon. The water is calm and tempting, but the sky above is big with thunder, lowering and black. Now the boat is moving towards the shore, and the maiden walks to meet it; the boatman helps her in, and puts out to sea again . . . . The dragon awakes, and the shore heaves and groans under his rage; but the boat is far away on the water. Daughter," con-

tinued the old man impressively, "the sea is treacherous, and hides many a monster in its smiling depths. Beware of it."

Henrietta was flushed and trembling; the nervous twitching of her hand told how truly the random arrows had hit the mark. She longed to know more, to ask some promise for the future, but Olga's presence prevented her. She drew back in silence—half satisfied, half disappointed.

Olga took her place at the table, and stretched out her hand with impatient curiosity.

"Tell me about my mother," she cried in a tremulous voice, "I don't care about my husband, tell me if mamma is well!"

"Alas, daughter! I may not speak such words of comfort to your heart," replied the soothsayer, mournfully, as he met the tearful entreaty of Olga's moist eye and quivering lip, "I see a cloud gathering in the east, and lo, above your gentle head . . . ."

But the sentence was not finished.

With a wild shriek, Olga fell senseless at his feet.

Henrietta flew to her side.

The charlatan who had so cruelly played on the poor child's credulity, rushed out, with undignified haste, in search of some restorative, while the old woman assisted Henrietta in lifting her from the damp earthen ground, and laying her on the only two chairs in the room.

"Is there no window you can open?" asked Henrietta; "she will never come to herself without air."

"No, lady," replied the juggler, who returned with a glass of cold water and some *eau-de-cologne;* "the light of day is unknown to me; the sun must not penetrate into the mysterious darkness where the spirit may alone commune with the invisible. But here is some cordial that will revive your friend. Have no fear for her; she has but swooned. It is not given to all to gaze with impunity into the future. The vision was too strong for the weak mind of this frail maiden. But see! she moves!"

"In pity's name, Monsieur, say some-

thing to undeceive her," whispered Henrietta, imploringly, as she saw her companion slowly awaking.

"I may not gainsay the truth," he answered, solemnly; "but this much you may tell the maiden. A comforter will be at hand in her hour of woe, and at her prayer that hour may be postponed."

"Dear Olga," said Henrietta, caressingly, as the pale face grew less livid under returning consciousness, "he did not mean that your mother was going to die, but that she would fall ill, and be restored to your prayers."

"Mother! mother!" sobbed Olga, convulsively, not catching the sense of Henrietta's words.

"If we could get her upstairs into the air," thought Henrietta. "Will you go to our friends, and ask one of them to come down?" she said to the woman.

On a sign from her master, the latter obeyed. She returned in a short time with the three others; no one would accompany the messenger alone, and no one would remain behind alone.

Olga was sitting up, and though still

pale and trembling, declared she could walk with help up the stairs.

The conjuror had disappeared behind the screen before the new comers arrived, so that Miss Lavinia and Miss Flemming were done out of their consultation.

It was not possible for Olga to walk home; accordingly, two cabs were hailed, and the five fortune-seekers were soon deposited at their own door.

But the shock to Olga's nerves was not to pass away so lightly. No assurance of Henrietta's that the fortune-teller had positively promised her mother's recovery, could rouse her from the despair into which his words had thrown her. She spent the night sleeplessly, and next morning was too ill to rise. Before night again, the delirium of fever brought relief to her tortured mind.

Of the four who had gone with her on that ill-judged and impious errand, no one dared to mention what had passed. They were all in fault, but Miss Lavinia felt the chief blame was due to her. If it became known to Madame St. Simon, she would be dismissed without appeal. She had

shamefully betrayed her trust in sanctioning what she knew to be both wrong and dangerous.

If Olga died from the effects of that day's folly, at whose door could her death be laid? Her entreaties to the three other girls not to betray her were pitiable in their cowardly selfishness; but the others were interested in keeping her secret, and so they kept it.

Henrietta and Milly, meanwhile, pondered over the wizard's words, and marvelled at the prophetic power they showed.

The oracle would have lost some of his prestige in their eyes had they known Mademoiselle Le Normand's answer to Napoleon I. when he asked how it was that, without any supernatural agency, she was able to tell so much of the past lives of those who consulted her. "Sire," replied the famous clairvoyante, "le peu que je sais, le peu qu'on me dit, et le peu que je devine, voilà toute ma science!"

CHAPTER III.

DURING Lent, the High Church portion of Miss Lavinia's flock gathered more frequently than usual round the Roman Catholic pulpits. It so happened that, owing to the crowd of worshippers, the young ladies were often separated from their *chaperon* before they secured seats, and Miss Lavinia was generally found waiting for her missing lambs at the church door when service was over.

The sermons were no doubt very edifying and very attractive, judging from the assiduity with which the young ladies attended them; it was likewise an excellent lesson in French, and Madame St. Simon saw no reason for preventing her pupils from enjoying it; they were sent to Paris to improve themselves.

Easter Sunday morning rose bright and

cloudless over the beautiful city, as the English governess, with four of the parlour-boarders, bent her way down the Champs Elysées. They were going to witness the solemn high mass at St. Eustache. The more conscientious of their Protestant companions had protested indignantly against this violation of the great festival, doubly a Sabbath to-day; but the High Church party maintained that they said their prayers as well at St. Eustache, and felt more devout than while sitting under good, prosy Mr. Brown.

So, much to the disedification of the Low Church ones, they set off at nine o'clock to their heterodox devotions.

The discussion which took place at the the last moment delayed them beyond their time. When they arrived, the building was already densely crowded, the organ was pealing out its rich volume of music, and the sacred ministrants were ascending the altar. It was impossible for Miss Lavinia to keep her flock together; they were separated from her almost immediately, and lost sight of each other in the crowd.

The service lasted two hours, and then the dense mass of human beings poured out from the sacred edifice, most of them, let us hope, carrying away with the perfume of the incense some sweeter fragrance of prayer in their hearts.

Miss Lavinia did not stir till the last notes of the "Domine Salvum" had died away, and the crowd had dispersed, leaving only a few stray worshippers scattered here and there, waiting, apparently, for friends parted from them in the crush, as Miss Lavinia had been from hers.

Miss Flemming was there, so were Milly Jackson and Miss Woods. On a sign from Miss Lavinia they came towards her; Henrietta was now the only one missing.

"I daresay she is somewhere at the other side," said Milly. "I got separated from her close by the pulpit; she must have made her way behind it; I'll walk round and look."

"We had better all go," replied Miss Lavinia, "or we shall have to send some one to look for you, and get separated again."

All five accordingly rose and walked round the church together; but no Henrietta was forthcoming.

"She must be waiting for us outside," suggested Miss Woods; "let us go and see."

But neither outside nor in was the truant to be seen.

Miss Lavinia was beginning to feel annoyed; she thought Henrietta was playing her a trick.

They came back into the church, and again walked all round the cloisters, peeping into every nook and corner where it was possible for the missing one to hide herself; in every confessional, behind every pillar, every statue, the side chapels were all searched, but to no purpose.

Now, Miss Lavinia began to feel uneasy.

"She may have fainted in the crowd, and been carried somewhere for assistance," she said, "where could we inquire?"

"At the Sacristy, I suppose," said Miss Flemming, "there's a soldier going in; let us ask him."

The soldier happened to be the *Suisse* of

the church, whose cocked hat and silver-slashed uniform had enough of the military character about it to justify the mistake.

The five ladies marched up to the parochial dignitary, and asked if a young lady who was supposed to have fainted had been taken to the Sacristy during service.

The *Suisse* replied that he had not heard of such a young lady, but he would inquire. The inquiry was made, but threw no light on the subject.

No interesting young lady had been seen in the Sacristy, nor had any been known to faint that morning.

A paralytic old lady had grown very nervous, and been helped out by the beadle at the commencement of the offices; that was the only accident the beadle knew of.

Miss Lavinia grew seriously alarmed. What was become of Henrietta? Where could she have gone to? Had nobody any idea?

Yes, Milly Jackson had an idea, but she kept it to herself.

From the moment Henrietta was found missing she had had a suspicion, and now it was almost a certainty.

Milly was less puzzled, but to the full as much astonished as Miss Lavinia. The idea that Henrietta would have eloped had never crossed her mind; if it had, nothing would have induced her to be a party to it.

Had Henrietta given her the slightest intimation of such a project, she would have used all her influence to dissuade her from it, and that failing would have gone straight to Madame St. Simon and denounced her. Milly had been saying this over and over to herself while they were sailing round about, and up and down the church, looking for what she feared was never to be found there. She was frivolous and unthinking, but at heart she was good and honest. This guilty flight of her companion shocked and stunned her; for guilty Henrietta was, however the flight might end; guilty of falsehood and disobedience to her family, of daring contempt of their authority, which she defied, of their sorrow or their anger, which she set at

nought. What blessing could there be on such a marriage?

But what if he did not marry her?

Milly's heart grew sick within her as the possibility of this horrible alternative rose up before her.

And she had been an accomplice in bringing it about—a tacit accomplice, she repeated, but still an accomplice. She had aided and encouraged Henrietta from that first fatal meeting in the church of the Madeleine, to the last interview of the pair at Belle-Vue on the night of the closing *soirée*. She had thought it good fun to play daisy-picker to the lovers, and would have scorned to betray her friend's secret, or refuse her assistance in concealing it from Madame St. Simon.

How bitterly she lamented the false honour that had led her to abet unwittingly such a misfortune as it had come to!

When she had joked Henrietta about the time she took before bringing her romance to a reality, and asked how soon Monsieur de Perronville was coming to propose officially, Henrietta used to reply that she did not wish him to speak to Madame

St. Simon until he had seen her guardian. How long had this flight been arranged? or had she resolved to elope with him from the first, and been deceiving Milly all through? She was asking herself such questions as these while the search was still kept up; Miss Lavinia continually wondering what was to be done, and if nobody had an idea.

"I have an idea that we had better go home," suggested Milly, as the party stood at the front door, after walking three times round the church inside, and twice outside.

"And what are we to say to Madame St. Simon?" inquired Miss Lavinia, staring helplessly about her.

"Tell her Henrietta has run away!"

"A pretty piece of advice!" snapped Miss Lavinia; "Madame St. Simon would tell me to run after her."

"Just as likely," assented Milly.

"Nonsense," cried Harrietta Woods, "what fault is it of Miss Lavinia's? She could not keep Henrietta in her pocket, I suppose! The question is, where is she gone?"

"Precisely," returned Milly; "that is the question, and we'll not settle it by standing here, that I can see."

"No," said Miss Flemming, "I think we had better go home."

Miss Lavinia thought that, under the circumstances, the best thing for her would have been not to go home at all, and for a moment the idea occurred to her of making her escape there and then; but it was only for a moment. Any property she possessed was at Belle-Vue—she could not run away without it. Besides, where was she to run to? Still the thought of meeting Madame St. Simon, with such a story as she had to tell, made her tremble in her shoes.

"Well," she cried, "you must all come with me to Madame, and tell her how it happened, and that I could not help it. As Harriet says, I could not keep you in my pocket; you might all run away for that matter, and I don't see how I could be to blame. But where in the name of wonder can the girl have run to? Can she be gone home?"

"To Belle-Vue!" exclaimed the others incredulously.

"No, to England; but now that you say it, she may have gone to Belle-Vue! It's the most likely thing, after all; she may have felt ill from the heat, and driven straight home. What fools we are not to have thought of it sooner!"

And Miss Lavinia hurried out of the church, greatly relieved by this possible solution of the mystery.

Whether her companions shared the hope or not, we cannot say; but certainly Milly Jackson did not.

She made no remark, but followed the party to the cab-stand on the Place St. Eustache, where the five stowed themselves into two *fiacres*, with a recommendation to *Messieurs les cochers* to drive as quickly as possible.

"Did Mademoiselle Henriette come in by herself?" asked Miss Lavinia of the *concierge*, springing up the lodge steps the moment the gate was opened.

"Mamzelle Henriette!" echoed the woman, raising her eye-brows. "No, she went out with you, didn't she? I counted

you six; *un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq*—did you lose the sixth on the road?"

"She has run away!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, wringing her hands.

"Bonne Vierge Marie!" ejaculated the *concierge*, dropping her knitting needles, and crossing herself devoutly.

"Come in, Miss Lavinia," said Milly, taking the governess by the arm; "we'll stand by you, but you had better go at once to Madame St. Simon, and tell her the truth; after all, she can't eat you!"

"No, but she can turn me out like a dog, as she did Miss Jones!" sobbed Miss Lavinia. "Mind your promise to take my part, and say I looked after you, and tried to keep you together—that I always do; mind you say it!"

"We will, indeed we will!" declared the girls emphatically, and Miss Lavinia allowed them to draw her away from the lodge.

"Is there anyone with Madame?" inquired Milly of the portress.

"Yes, Mamzelle, two ladies."

"Then we can go upstairs and wait a

bit," proposed Miss Lavinia, breathing more freely, "it's better not to hurry,"

What was to be gained by not hurrying, her pupils were at a loss to see; still, they were all glad of a few minutes' reprieve before leading Miss Lavinia to the slaughter.

"We had better not take off our things," said Milly, "but wait till the coast is clear, and then go at once to Madame St. Simon. Come to my room—we can see from the window when those people go."

They did as she proposed; Miss Woods keeping watch like sister Anne, while the governess fidgeted about the room, pulling open her bonnet-strings, and tying them again every time she heard a door shut up or down stairs.

"How warm it is!" remarked Milly Jackson, drawing her handkerchief across her forehead.

"You've dropped something," said Miss Flemming, picking up a letter that fell from her companion's pocket; "it's Henrietta's writing, or I'm greatly mistaken."

Milly turned very white. Yes, it was Henrietta's writing.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Miss

Lavinia, "I hope she has had the conscience to explain that I'm not to blame. Read it, Milly!"

"I dare say," observed Milly, lingering over the address, and wondering how far the letter was likely to compromise her. Henrietta could hardly speak of her flight without disclosing Milly's knowledge of its antecedents. "If so," she thought, "I have more to fear than Miss Lavinia."

"For pity's sake open it!" cried the latter, impatiently; "you can't read it through the envelope!"

"I didn't expect to do so," snubbed Miss Jackson. She broke the seal leisurely, and read what follows:—

"Dearest Milly,

"When you read this, I shall be far from you. Do not be angry with me for what may seem a want of confidence, but I thought it was better for both of us that I should not share my secret with you; it might have brought you into trouble, and you could not have helped me, had you wished to do it. I shall meet my future husband to-day at St. Eustache, whence he

will take me to be married privately at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Madame St. Simon will be surprised at my leaving her so suddenly, but she must have expected the step sooner or later. Monsieur de Perronville made no secret of his love for me, and his intention of carrying me off clandestinely, if, as I feared, my guardian refused his consent to our marriage. Unfortunately my fears proved too true. In reply to Adrien's letter, asking for my hand in the most honourable way, my guardian said that nothing would induce him to consent to my marriage with a Frenchman; that he would renounce me for ever if I degraded myself by such an alliance, &c. In fact, the letter was so grossly insulting, that Adrien, out of regard for my feelings, refused to let me see it. At his request, I had not written myself to my guardian on the subject; but no duty that I owe as a ward could justify my sacrificing the happiness of my life to such tyranny.

"There is something else I had resolved to tell you before we parted, and which must have prevented our keeping up intercourse when we left school. I am an actress.

My father and mother were both on the stage, and when they died I had no choice but to follow the same profession. My position is now changed, and I trust, therefore, we may meet again as equals and friends. And now, dearest Milly, adieu! I shall never forget how kind you have always been to me. The best wish I can bestow on you is that you may find a husband as good and as noble as mine. You shall not hear from me again till I sign myself,

"HENRIETTA DE PERRONVILLE."

Milly was thunder-struck. Brought up for the stage!—it was too queer to happen anywhere out of a book!

"She was an actress! well, I never!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia.

"She'll be a viscountess now," said Miss Flemming.

"I hope she may," added Miss Lavinia.

"Poor Henrietta!" said Milly, sadly, "I wish you had trusted me!"

It was evidently intended that Madame St. Simon should see the letter, and Milly felt grateful for the care Henrietta had

taken that no word in it should compromise her friend.

"Well, I suppose Madame St. Simon will see I had nothing to do with it," cried Miss Lavinia. "It would have been only just if Miss Wilson had said as much; but people are so selfish, never considering any one but themselves."

"Perhaps you would like to show this to Juno," observed Milly, handing her the letter.

"I think it would be much more proper if you showed it to her yourself," remarked Miss Lavinia; "it was written to you, and you and Henrietta were old friends."

"In plain English, you're afraid to face Madame St. Simon, and want to find an excuse for shirking it; but I don't see why I should be made a scape-goat," continued Milly, "not that I care a fig for her anger; it's rather good fun to see her in a tantrum, she's so savage afterwards for slipping down off her pedestal."

"Yes," rejoined Miss Woods, "you have the spirit of a dozen, Milly; I wish I were half as plucky as you!"

Now Milly's weak point was her spirit;

she valued it more than wisdom or wit, and was never sorry for an opportunity of improving her character as the pluckiest girl in the school. Miss Woods' compliment put her on her metal.

"I don't mind if I do go," she said, defiantly. "I suppose those people are gone by this time." She folded up Henrietta's letter, and went to the window.

"I heard the gate bang while you were reading," said Miss Woods, "it must have been they."

"Wish me good speed then," said Milly, walking to the door.

"There's a dear!" cried Miss Lavinia, catching her by the arm; "mind you say how I looked after you all, how I never took my eyes off you, and that if . . . ."

"That if you plague me I'll not go at all!" protested Milly, turning on her angrily.

"Well, you'll say for the best," said Miss Lavinia coaxingly.

We need not follow Milly to Madame St. Simon's boudoir. Suffice it to say the interview was less stormy than might have been expected.

Madame St. Simon was astounded and terrified—terrified for herself, not for her ill-fated pupil.

An *enlèvement* from her house! By a man, too, whom she herself had introduced there—no clandestine acquaintance picked up out of doors by a coquette on the look-out for conquest! Quel esclandre, quel affreux esclandre! Madame St. Simon lost sight of every one and everything in this one appalling fact. That Henrietta had gone to irreparable ruin, she had not a doubt. This marriage at Boulogne, and pretended correspondence of the Viscount with his victim's guardian, did not deceive Madame St. Simon.

But what was the ruin and the shame of an innocent girl to her! She would have sacrificed every body and soul under her roof, to have sheltered *cette chère maison* form one blast of scandal.

If it could only be kept secret! But for that unlucky letter it might have been. Henrietta's friends would be more anxious than even Madame St. Simon to hush up the affair, and no one in the school would have known the true version of the story.

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There was no hope of that now. The murder was out, and every chance of concealment gone.

She was stunned, bewildered, as all this passed rapidly through her brain.

Milly had expected a storm, and this heavy, silent, concentrated rage that gathered like a thunder-cloud on Madame St. Simon's brow, awed her more than a hurricane of vituperation would have done.

The mistress asked her if she had been a party to her companion's flight, and Milly answered fearlessly, "No."

"You may go," observed Madame St. Simon.

And Milly went.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY STANHOPE'S health had been so benefited by her first winter at Madeira, that it was considered advisable for her to pass a second there. This arrangement prolonged Mabel's stay at Belle-Vue from one year to two; so it was only when the August vacation came round for the second time, that Sir John arrived in Paris and fetched his daughter home to Hampshire.

There was much merry-making and rejoicing at Mabel's return. The tenantry, marshalled like an army of volunteers, stood waiting at the F—— terminus to escort the Baronet's daughter to Stanhope Park, walking on either side of the stately old chariot like a guard of honour. And a staunch and goodly guard they made; and right proud was Sir John of his tenantry and the loyal love they bore him.

They were all true blue to the marrow,

every man, woman, and child of them; true to the Church and State and the good old times, scorning all new fangled notions about free trade and such like modern mismanagement, that tampered with things their fathers held sacred before them.

Sir John was the fourteenth baronet who had reigned at the Park, and kept up the character of the old English gentleman within and without its walls.

A courtly host and trusty friend, a just landlord and a liberal master, stern and uncompromising in his duty, he was, perhaps, a trifle too stern in the exaction of duty from those around him. Every man respected the Baronet, but few men loved him. He was a kind husband, doing his duty strictly to his wife, and demanding in return, blind, unquestioning submission to his will. Obedience was a wife's first duty, and Sir John had taught Lady Stanhope that to harbour a thought in opposition to her husband, was little short of infidelity. He was a good father, devoted and indulgent, tainting his authority with perhaps a shade of tyranny. Mabel was his property, to be disposed of as he thought fit; educated on a plan of his own,

and to be married some day to a man of his choosing. That trip to Paris was an innovation on his pre-arranged programme, granted to Mabel's own persuasion.

The Baronet would have been very wroth if any one had told him so; nevertheless it was a fact. His daughter managed him pretty much as she liked; not by any sort of diplomacy, but by a fearless trust in his love, that she knew could deny her no wish it was in his power to grant.

As she sat beside him that warm autumn day, in the flush of her young beauty, Sir John was proud as a bridegroom bringing home his bride. Mabel was more happy than proud; yet there was a thrill of natural, honest pride mingled with her joy. It was pleasant to feel that her presence would light a bonfire on every hill, and fill a goblet that every hand would lift with a cheer and a blessing to her name. She was proud, above all, of her father.

The Baronet never showed to better advantage than on occasions like the present. He felt somewhat of a liege lord, sur-

rounded by his vassals, and answered their hearty good wishes with the condescending familiarity that sits so gracefully on the high-born in their intercourse with inferiors.

Sir John had expected his return would have been properly noticed, but had not looked for such a reception as this. He showed his pleasurable surprise by calling Mabel's attention to every detail of the preparations made in her honour. Young girls of her own age carried white and blue banners, with my young lady's name in letters of gold, and wreaths of flowers hung from the trees all along the road homewards. It was all very simple; there was no attempt at artistic decoration. The whole thing was done by labouring hands, and for that reason all the more graceful and touching. Every man was in his Sunday suit; the women had taken out their gayest caps and smartest gowns to do honour to the day.

Mabel had a kind word for all her old friends, a smile of friendly recognition for every one.

It was a long drive from the railway to

Stanhope Park, going, as they were, at foot pace, and Mabel was impatient to get to the end of it. Lady Stanhope was watching from her window, and, no doubt, found the time long waiting. But it would be ungracious to break into a trot and outstrip the gallant foot-guard, so she curbed her impatience, and tried to look as delighted as Sir John himself.

Her mother had proposed coming to meet the travellers at the terminus, but this the Baronet forbade in the most peremptory manner. It was Lady Stanhope's place to wait at home to receive him and his daughter; he could not hear of her doing otherwise, it would be an indecorous breach of etiquette, and Lady Stanhope, of course, submitted.

At last they reached the Park gates, that stood wide open to admit the *cortége*. As it wound slowly up to the Castle, Mabel could not restrain her tears. How calm, and grand, and beautiful the old place looked! The Castle crimson-tinted in the setting sun, and the smooth, green lawn in front dotted with flower beds and spreading oaks.

"Dear, dear old home!" exclaimed Mabel, looking towards the drawing-room windows, whence two eyes were wistfully watching, "how glad I am to come back to you!"

"You'll not be in a hurry to run away from it, Mab, will you?" asked Sir John.

Mabel nestled close to her father, and looking up at him with a loving smile:

"I'll never leave it again, papa, never!" she repeated passionately.

"Nay, no rash promises, pussy; you'll be breaking them one of these days."

"No one on earth shall ever take me away from you, papa. Oh! there's mamma on the terrace! do let me out?"

And without waiting for his permission, she threw open the carriage door, and breaking through the crowd, that fell back as she alighted, rushed up the steps into Lady Stanhope's arms.

Whatever Sir John thought of the indecorous proceeding, he let it pass without reproof, and following his daughter to the terrace, addressed a few suitable words to his faithful vassals; thanking them for their cordial demonstration of affection to his

daughter, and inviting them to drink her health next day at the Castle.

Then with three cheers for Sir John and my lady, and my young lady, the long line of march filed off down the avenue, and soon disappeared amongst the massive chestnut trees.

Mabel's return was followed by visits and invitations from every family in the county. She was courted and admired enough to satisfy her mother's love and her father's pride. It was said that her visit to the Continent had improved her wonderfully. The ladies pronounced her "a sweet creature," and the gentlemen, "a deuced pretty girl."

Sir John paraded his daughter's drawings and paintings with becoming solemnity; repelling with proper humility the compliments his own naïve admiration would have evoked, had the artistic efforts deserved no praise themselves.

Balls and dinners were given all over Hampshire, where Miss Stanhope was acknowledged to be the Belle of the county. In fact, Mabel was in a fair way of having her head turned, for, "all the world conspired to praise her."

But she was not one to be spoiled by kindness at home or flattery abroad.

There was a monitor at hand, an unseen guardian, that stood like a sentinel at the entrance of her heart; one whose warning, welcome or unwelcome, Mabel never spurned: the still, small voice of conscience. Not always still or small, but always audible, and sometimes loud and stern, crying out with unerring sagacity, whenever an enemy's foot fall came within ear-shot of its stronghold; no matter how stealthy the step, how disguised the intruder, no cunning could trick the trusty watchman into mistaking a foe for a friend.

And well it was for Mabel that her spirit was so guarded, or rather that she accepted the uncompromising guide so honestly and so meekly.

When all around her joined in ministering to her self-love, and spoiling the charm of her unconscious goodness, the thought would sometimes arise, "Am I so much better than others, to be so loved and admired?"

But the monitor was at his post, point-

ing to the danger and the sin that lay side by side with the vain thought.

The adulation of the world found a counterpoise, too, in Lady Stanhope's gentle wisdom. She was as fond a mother as ever lived, loving her child with an almost idolatrous love, but refraining, as far as she knew it, from any word of flattery that might have caused Mabel to cast a look of complacency on her gifts, or her efforts after good. She stimulated her by advice and example, in the pursuit of all true superiority, but never spoiled the effect of a generous effort by any exaggeration of its worth.

Mabel was a great comfort to her, and a great joy. It had been a hard trial, that separation of nearly two years, but when her child was given back to her, so good, so beautiful, so unspoilt, Lady Stanhope felt amply rewarded for the sacrifice. Each day the mother and child were drawn nearer to each other, and Lady Stanhope grew every day more alive to the beauties of Mabel's character, and the rare gifts with which it was endowed. That comparatively short period of absence had

done much towards developing the young girl; she went to Belle-Vue a child, and returned at eighteen, flowering out into womanhood, with the rich dower of every womanly grace and beauty.

All earthly joys and blessings were gathered round her; there was no wish ungratified, no pleasure beyond her reach. The present was bathed in sunshine; the future spread out before her, bright with hope, and sorrow-proof in its promise of happiness.

Yet, at times, Lady Stanhope fancied Mabel was not happy as she ought to be.

It could only be a fancy. She did not venture to give it utterance, or ask a question where the answer was so self-evident. What could a girl of eighteen want or wish for, that Mabel had not?

That shadow that fell over her face when she thought herself alone or unnoticed, could only be the shadow of repose or thought. How brightly the face shone out when it had passed away!

If Mabel had been "out," away from her mother, Lady Stanhope would have laid it down to the only cause that can

reasonably be ascribed to pensiveness at eighteen; but at Belle-Vue there had been no damage done to her heart; Mabel would have told her mother had it been otherwise. Lady Stanhope shared that sweet, motherly illusion, in common with all good mothers, that her daughter had not a thought hidden from her.

She forgot that, in one sense, every human soul must remain a stranger to the other; that there are mysterious depths of thought, wild dreams and hopes, none the less pure for the mystery or the wildness into which not even a mother's eye may peer.

Mabel's chief triumph, in the way of accomplishments, was painting. She sang prettily and with taste; but her voice was not powerful enough to have stimulated any great effort in cultivating it. She used to say herself, "that it was just strong enough to sing papa to sleep after dinner."

Painting she had studied especially during her stay at Belle-Vue, and she devoted much of her time to it now at home.

Lady Stanhope loved to watch Mabel at

her work, and would have her embroidery frame carried out to the terrace, or some shady spot in the park, from which the young artist had caught a pretty bit of landscape. Sir John sometimes joined them, and read aloud, while his wife and daughter were busy at their needle and brush, interrupting himself occasionally to comment on his author, or offer some suggestion to Mabel. Sir John was not much of an artist, but the Stanhopes, since the flood, had been patrons of art, and he had studied painting and music sufficiently to enable him to patronize painters and musicians.

Mabel was too fully impressed with the sense of her father's superiority to question his capability of advising her in this as in everything else. She believed in him, thoroughly and entirely.

This was part of the secret of her unbounded influence with the Baronet. He respected the intellect that worshipped his own so wisely; there could be no doubt of the soundness of his daughter's, since she appreciated so well the superiority of his.

"That foreground wants light, Mab, and your sky is too heavy," he observed, closing his book and leaning over Mabel's shoulder.

"My skies always are," she replied, pouting; "and as to an atmosphere, Pompey would make a better one."

The individual rejoicing in the name of Pompey, was the watch-dog, who lay at full length on the grass, fast asleep, his head resting on Mabel's knee. On hearing his name, he started with canine gallantry to answer the summons, thereby upsetting the contents of her glass over the above-named atmosphere.

"Oh! my poor child," exclaimed Lady Stanhope in dismay, "that dreadful dog has spoiled your whole week's work."

"I'm not quite sure he hasn't improved it," said Mabel, holding up the board to let the flood of discoloured water drip off into the grass.

"You unmannerly dog! are you ashamed of yourself, sir?" demanded Sir John, looking very seriously at the offender. Pompey did look ashamed of himself, and by way of apology, wagged his

tail and poked his great black muzzle under his master's arm.

"I told you he'd make a better attempt at an atmosphere than mine, papa; just look if that green tint over the whole hasn't thrown more light into it?"

"Well, my dear, I can't say I agree with you; but if it comforts you to think so, by all means do."

"Don't be sarcastic, papa; you know you're always finding fault with my want of transparency, and positively Pompey has made this transparent. Just see, mamma, and tell me if he hasn't?"

"If Pompey threw down the house, are you quite sure he could not build it up again?" asked Lady Stanhope with an indulgent smile.

"Oh, if you are both going to make fun of me, I'll take myself off; so will Pompey."

Upon which Pompey wagged assent, and Mabel collected the contents of her paint-box, to make good her threat of departure.

"It's a pity to lose that, Mab," observed Sir John, pointing to the sunset.

"Yes," replied Mabel, looking regretfully at the golden glory in the west; "but I cannot touch my paper now; it will take half an hour to recover Pompey's bath."

"Besides, it's growing rather chilly," added Lady Stanhope. "I don't like you to be out so late, my child, without any extra covering. It was thoughtless of me not to remind you to take a wrap of some sort."

"When I was a young lady, I didn't want my mamma to remind me," observed Sir John, "I thought of those things for myself."

"Dear mamma, you know I never catch cold when I'm busy," declared Mabel, turning a deaf ear to her father's reproof.

"Of course not," said Sir John, "it would be too great loss of time; would it not, Pompey?" Who's this coming behind us?"

"Who 'ud it be but me?" answered the new-comer, in a mellow Irish brogue, panting violently to recover her breath. "Who 'ud it be but me, to come and look after the child, and hinder her catchin'

her death, out in the dew, with that flimsy rag of a muslin."

"You're quite right, O'Dowd," said Lady Stanhope, as the woman wrapped a voluminous shawl round Mabel. "I don't know what any of us should do, if you were not here to look after us."

"Indeed, and it isn't the likes o' me that 'ud make bold to contradick your ladyships," replied O'Dowd, pinning the shawl vigorously across Mabel's chest, and getting kissed by that young lady for her pains.

"The fact is, O'Dowd, you've brought her up badly; she never thinks for herself, because you always think for her," said Sir John gravely.

"Bless her innocent heart! Hasn't she a power o' things to mind besides them sort?" answered the nurse apologetically. "Sure, it's a wonder her head don't bust with all the foreign tongues and music and larnin' it's got crammed into it, let 'lone the yards of poethry she has off, as pat as a parrot."

Mabel laughed heartily at this enumeration of her accomplishments.

"Take mamma's frame, Dowdy," she said, "and Pompey will carry home my portfolio."

It had cost his mistress no small amount of patience and toil to teach Pompey this feat, and when she had succeeded Mabel was very proud of her pupil. He walked on majestically, balancing his cargo on the tip of his tail, to the intense delight of Dowdy; she clapped and cheered to a degree that Mabel pronounced very prejudicial to the dog's mind.

"He's quite conceited enough, Dowdy; if you want to cheer somebody, cheer me; there's no saying what I've gone through drilling him and educating him."

As they reached the Castle, the dinner bell rang out its merry summons from the belfry.

"Come along, acushla, till I make you a bit smart. I can't have her sthrippin' her neck now, milady, after being out in the dew; the child 'ud be catching cold on me," said O'Dowd to Lady Stanhope, as she closed the drawing-room door, taking care to shut it to, before Sir John had time to put in a protest. The Baronet

held to his daughter's appearing in full dress at dinner, and never permitted an infringement on the rule without some good reason. It was a standing grievance of O'Dowd's, this habit of "sthrippin" for dinner, as she called it; and she had waged war against it with a pertinacity that Sir John, though he never gave in to it, tolerated with a condescension that often astonished even O'Dowd herself.

But the Baronet was too true a conservative to interfere with time-honoured institutions, and O'Dowd was an institution at the Park. All the nurses of all the Stanhopes had been so since the flood.

They had their rights and privileges which were never interfered with. They might scold their fellow-servants, and treat on equal terms with their masters, giving advice when it was not asked, and meddling in all matters that concerned the children, long after the said children had been taken from their jurisdiction, and had ceased to be infants, even in law.

To O'Dowd, Mabel was always "the child;" she persisted in talking to her,

and of her, as if she were still two years old, and in danger of capsizing, or rolling down stairs, or putting her spoon into her eye instead of her mouth, or any other infantine misdemeanour, the moment she was out of Dowdy's sight.

"Dowdy" stood for O'Dowd, in Mabel's juvenile dialect, and she continued to call her so now, except when any extra tyrannical measure towards the nursling, brought forth a spark of rebellion, and translated "Dowdy" into a dignified "O'Dowd."

"Dowdy, *I will* wear a low body today; you know papa doesn't like to see me go down in a high one," Mabel insisted authoritatively.

"It's in your winding sheet he'll be seein' you one o' these days, I'm thinkin'! Did ever any one hear the like! the child's wet thru' with the dew, and nothin' 'll do but she must be a sthrippin' herself on the top of it!"

"You dear, old goose!" cried Mabel, shaking O'Dowd by the shoulder, "don't talk nonsense about winding sheets, I'm no more wet than the carpet. Give me

my blue silk. Quick! I'll keep papa waiting if you don't make haste."

"A good thing, too, that he's got you to wait for! But he'll wait till to-morrow, afore he sees you in the blue silk."

"O'Dowd! I *will* have it!" and Mabel sat down defiantly at her dressing-table.

"Well, well, it's a nice time o' day, when I'm to be 'O'Dowded' because I won't stand by, and see the child I nursed digging her own grave, without sayin' boo to prevent it.

"If O'Dowd begins on the pathetic," thought Mabel, "there's no knowing where it will end."

She took no heed of the heart-rending sigh that followed the touching appeal to her feelings, but went on brushing her hair.

"When I think of all it cost me to rear you," continued the aggrieved party, opening the wardrobe where Mabel's dresses were hanging from a double row of pegs; "all the nights I spent watchin' you when you was a baby; all the tears I shed over you when you was a'chokin' with the croop, and a'reddening' with the

meazles, and a'crowin' with the hoopin'-cough; and now, in my old age, to be O'Dowded, and disrespected in that fashion!"

Mabel, by way of propitiation, began to hum, "Patrick's Day in the Morning."

"Oh, you'll have time enough to sing when I'm stark and stiff in my coffin, you'll be mindin' my words when I'm gone. Here's the blue silk!"

"You dear old Dowdy!" exclaimed Mabel, atoning for her mutiny by a hug and a kiss, "I knew you only wanted to be coaxed."

"If that's French for coaxin', you ought to have said it," grunted O'Dowd, "for it looked mighty like somethin' else!"

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT a blow to his family! what a disgrace to the county! one of the oldest names in it!" and Sir John threw an open letter on the breakfast table, with a gesture of indignation.

"What is it, dear papa?" inquired Mabel, anxiously, holding the cream-jug in abeyance over her father's cup.

Sir John made no answer, but stood up and leaned his back against the mantelpiece; he was agitated and apparently distressed by the news, whatever it was.

Mabel laid down the cream-jug, and went up to him.

"What is it, father? Who has disgraced himself?" she repeated, putting her two hands on the Baronet's shoulder and looking up into his face.

"Where is your mother, child?" he said abruptly, "go and fetch her."

"She's not coming down this morning; she slept badly, and I persuaded her to have her breakfast in bed."

"You did right," he said more gently, "she coughed a good deal through the night; I don't understand this cough of hers coming back, I think we must have other advice."

"Dear father, you're not uneasy, are you?" inquired the young girl, growing pale as she put the question.

"No, Mab, I hope not; I mean I am not."

"Oh! no," she said, straining anxiously into her father's eyes, to see if they belied his words; "no, no, mamma has hardly coughed at all lately, and every one says she has grown stouter. Don't let such a terrible fear into your heart, father; even to think of it, makes my own grow sick."

"Pray the Almighty to ward off such a sorrow from us," said Sir John, reverently; "but there are griefs greater to bear than such as this, because they thwart God's will even more than ours."

"What sorrow can befall us against His will?" she asked simply.

"Sin, falsehood, treachery in those we love! Such a sorrow as this, has come upon our friend Admiral Oldacre, through his son."

"Falsehood, treachery!" echoed Mabel, in dismay, "through Herbert! impossible, father! What has he done, that you should speak so of him?"

"He has betrayed his conscience, and denied his God," cried the Baronet vehemently; "he has forsaken the church of his fathers; he has turned Papist!"

"Ah! is that?—"

"Is that true, you would say! No wonder you doubt it, child; it is almost too horrible for belief—but there it is, under his father's hand! Poor Oldacre! brave old sailor! it's a hard blow for such a sturdy churchman—a hard blow," and Sir John walked up and down the room.

"Yes," murmured his daughter, in a low voice, "the Admiral will feel it sorely; but it might have been worse. If Herbert had been carried home with his brains dashed out, like Lady Falkland's son, last winter; or—"

Sir John turned round sharply, and fixed

a stern look on his daughter; Mabel had never seen such a look on her father's face since the day he told her he would shoot her with his own hand, if he ever found her guilty of a lie.

"Did I hear aright?" he asked, in a tone that ran through his listener's heart like a splinter of ice. "Did you dare to wrong that high-born English gentleman, that noble, honest Christian, by implying that death would lie more heavily on him than dishonour?—that he would not rather see his son, his first-born, brought home a corpse, than live to blush for him as a renagade and a traitor? Is it from a Stanhope that I heard such words as these?"

Mabel turned her blanched face towards her father, and clasped her hands together. "Forgive me, father," she gasped, "I—"

"Listen to me, Mabel;" and the Baronet walked close up to his daughter, who sat, pale and trembling, like a guilty thing, "You are dear to me as my heart's blood; but if I thought you would live to bring shame on my grey hairs, by such a deed as this of Herbert Oldacre's, so help me God

I would rather see you fall dead at my feet!"

A low, wailing cry broke from Mabel, but Sir John did not heed it. Snatching up the Admiral's letter, he strode hastily out of the library, and then went straight to his wife's room.

Mabel had fainted away.

She lay there, calm and unconscious, her head fallen back against the high, old-fashioned chair, and drooping on her shoulder.

Duggan, the butler, found her still senseless when he came in with some hot dish, that sent savoury fumes from under its silver cover. The proper person to be summoned in such an emergency was Mrs. O'Dowd, and Duggan hurriedly betook himself in search of her.

Mabel awoke, as her faithful nurse entered the room, and, so probably prevented the good woman being seized with a fit of apoplexy at the sight of her darling's death-like swoon. The young girl opened her eyes, and saw Duggan beside her with a glass of water in his hand, while O'Dowd chafed her temples. The urn was singing

and hissing very loud, she thought; the silver on the breakfast-table sparkled and danced like flashes of lightning; the room did not feel quite steady, and she was not perfectly sure whether Duggan was himself or Herbert Oldacre.

"What's ailing you, honey?" said O'Dowd, stroking the pale cheek tenderly. "What happened you, acushla, to take on like that? Tell your own Dowdy."

"Shall I go for my lady, Miss?" asked the butler, seeing Mabel's eye wander round the room in search of somebody or something.

"What 'ud you be goin' to my lady for?" snapped O'Dowd; "aint *I* here?"

"I thought Miss Stanhope was looking for my lady," said Duggan respectfully.

"Oh, I'm quite well now," and Mabel sat up, leaning her hand on O'Dowd's arm, and smiling into her face; "don't look so solemn, Dowdy, I was only weak and frightened."

"Frightened at what, Mavourneen?" and O'Dowd looked about, ready to wreak vengeance on the cause of her child's alarm.

"Oh, nothing; let me go to my room; I feel tired; but where is papa? Why doesn't he come to breakfast?"

"He'll be by presently, darlint; will I give you a cup o' tea to refresh you? Be off, you, to your business now; we've no more call for you here."

"Thank you, Duggan," said Mabel, looking kindly at the old servant, to atone for his unceremonious dismissal. "Pray don't say anything in the hall about my fainting. I'd rather mamma did not hear of it."

"Certainly, Miss. I hope you feel all right again."

"Quite right, thank you; I'm going to eat my breakfast."

To make good the assurance, she stood up, and desiring O'Dowd to see what was hidden under the dish-cover, resumed her seat at the table.

"The Lord spare my eye-sight! if that isn't the masther, or his fetch, asthridin' away down there by the lake!" cried O'Dowd, dropping the fork out of her hand.

Mabel turned round, and looking

through the eastern window of the library, descried, in the distance, the tall figure of Sir John walking rapidly past the lake. He must have left the house soon after he quitted her, for it was fifteen minutes' walk to the Park gate, and he was now close to it. She went to the window, and stood watching him through the chestnut trees. The lodge-keeper swung back the gate, and Sir John passed out into the high road.

"Where can he be gone to? He has not breakfasted," Mabel said, as if speaking to herself.

"Ah then, that's just what I'm thinking," responded O'Dowd. "Maybe he's gone to see afther the rector; he was poorly yesterday, the post-boy told them at the gate, and I told the masther; but sure there was no hurry for him to go fussin' off about it this hour of the morning; and he fastin' too."

"He turned to the left, so he can't be gone to Mr. Carston's," observed Mabel, musingly; "oh, I know . . . . he's gone to the Admiral's."

"And what call 'ud he have at the Admiral's, honey?"

Mabel pressed her cheek against the window, and kept gazing out in the direction her father had taken.

It was a dull, grey morning. A hazy mist hung over the Park, wrapping the green sward and luxuriant old trees in a transparent fog. One could hardly say whether it was raining or not; the landscape had that still, sleepy look it sometimes wears at the first waking of the dawn.

"It's a mighty queer mornin' for him to trip off to the Grange, and he fastin'," observed O'Dowd; "what did he want with the Admiral, I wonder?"

"I don't know . . . . that is, he didn't tell me; he didn't say he was going, but I fancy he is."

"What makes you fancy it, honey?" persevered O'Dowd.

"The Admiral has met with a great . . ." Mabel hesitated, "a great disappointment. He wrote to tell papa of it this morning, and I dare say papa has gone over to the Grange to talk about it."

"Sure an' I'm sorry for that," sympathized O'Dowd, "for there ain't a finer gentleman in the county, barrin' the masther himself. And Captain Herbert too, a raal gentleman; so cool, and civil, and qualified like. And what harm's come to them, acushla?"

"You'll not call it harm, Dowdy," replied Miss Stanhope, still leaning against the mullioned casement of the window, and peering out into the drizzly landscape. "Captain Herbert has become a Catholic."

"Glory be to God!" ejaculated O'Dowd, clasping her hands, and casting a fervent look heavenward, "glory be to God!"

Mabel turned round, and saw the great grey eyes still lifted up in thanksgiving, and running over with big tears.

"Dowdy," she said, "I wonder how papa ever trusted you to nurse me, and bring me up; wasn't he afraid you'd try to make a Catholic of me?"

"The masther took me, because he couldn't help himself," replied O'Dowd, "and he kep me, because I wouldn't go away. My lady was took ill when you was a wee thing, two weeks old, and the

docthers said she should give over nursing, or she'd soon be in her coffin, with you alongside of her. The village was hunted for a nurse, but there wasn't one the docthers 'ud give you to. I was on my way to Southampton, where my good man and me was to take our passage for America, when I was taken ill up at the village."

"Well, Dowdy?"

"Well, honey," continued O'Dowd, in a husky voice, "it was as fine a child as ever a mother set eyes on, tho' I'm his mother that says it, and more like an angel than a baby; so the Lord thought, for it hadn't seen the light fifteen days, when He took it up to Heaven in a convulsion, and made a raal angel of it. I was cryin' fit to break my heart, so was Tom O'Dowd (God rest his soul), when there come in a docther from the Castle here, as was sent by my lady to see how me and the baby was goin' on. When he saw how it was, he went back to my lady and said I'd make a beautiful nurse for her own baby, if they could get me to cheer up a bit and take kindly to you, and

if Tom O'Dowd was agreeable. So my lady sent you down to me to look at you, thinkin' the sight of you ought to cheer me; and sure so it did, for you was the loveliest baby, barrin' my own, that the light ever shone on; you was as white as a lily, and as pink as a rose, and you was dressed like a queen, all in lace, and a long white gown, broidhered from tip to toe. You never seed the like!"

O'Dowd paused. That first vision of Mabel's beauty came back on her as vividly, as if she had seen it but yesterday. She warmed into enthusiasm talking of it.

Mabel threw her arms round the faithful creature, and said in that sweet, childish way that encouraged O'Dowd to look on her still as a baby in long clothes,

"Tell more about me, Dowdy."

"Lord love you, sure I'd go on tellin' till the day o'judgment, and there 'ud be more to tell. You took to me the moment they put you into my arms, as if you knew'd I was going to be a mother to you. And I felt like gettin' back my own child again; for though you was a girl, and he a

boy, you was both born the same day. So the masther asked no questions about whether I was a Turk or a Papist, only come down himself in the carriage and brought me up here as fine as a lady!"

"How nice!" exclaimed Mabel, as if she had been in doubt how the story would end; "but when did papa find out you were a Catholic, Dowdy?"

"Next Sunday, darlint; it was a Monday I come, and when the Sunday come round, and they was all goin' to Church, the masther said he hoped I'd pull up by that day week, and be able to go too. 'Thank you kindly, sir,' says I, 'but sure it's to the Chapel I'll be goin'.' 'What Chapel?' says he, 'are you a Methodicks?' 'No, sir,' says I, 'I'm a Catholic.' Lord love you! he turned as white as if I said I was a ghost. He was goin' to speak, but my lady made a sign to you, as was lyin' in my lap, asleep; the masther knew she meant it 'ud be bad for you if he fussed me or gave me a turn; so he just said, 'Well, Mrs. O'Dowd, we'll talk of this by and bye, and went off.'"

"Was mamma as much put out about it as papa?" inquired Mabel.

"Bless her! No; it gave her a start, to be sure; but, as she told me, she said to the masther, if I was an honest woman and in stout health, I'd nurse you as well as the best Protestant in the kingdom. And so I did, and you came on as bravely as a young poney, and you was as plump as a puddin'; so it was settled I was to stay with you till you was weaned."

"Well, and when I was weaned?"

"They made believe they was goin' to get rid of me, but they never meant it," added O'Dowd emphatically, "no more did I. We knew the child, that was you, 'ud have got a weanin' fit, and gone up to Heaven, like her brother; so afther a power o' talkin' and discoorsin', it was ordained as how I was to keep you till you went into frocks; that meant, when you was two year old. Just, as good luck 'ud have it, when the time come round, you sickened with the measles, and as soon as I brought you through, you caught the hoopin' cough, and we all went to the sea for a change.

"Then you was puny and delicate for a long time, and the docthers, bless 'em, said it 'ud never do to send me away from you till you got strong. You was a good while pickin' up, and though I says it that shouldn't, if you hadn't had the best of good nursin', you'd never have picked up at all."

"I dare say not," assented the nursling, complacently.

"That you wouldn't, and I often said it to my lady, not that I make a boast of it, child, but it's the thruth. Well, you was four year old, when the masther sent for me in here one mornin', and said he wanted to confer with me. My lady was lyin' there on that sofa under your grandfather's picthur'—she was never hardy-like since you was—since you had the hoopin' cough; she took on about it, and worried too much. 'O'Dowd,' says the masther, 'you've held a responsible position in my establishment for the last four years'—that's just how he began; I remember the words as if they was yesterday—'and Lady Stanhope and I have a great respect for you,' says he, 'and we'd be very sorry to

part with you.' I said nothing, for I felt comin' all over, like pins and needles, but I was resolved to stand up for my own if it come to that. 'Yes, very sorry, Dowdy,' said my lady; she never called me Dowdy except to you, and I knew she meant it friendly now, though somehow it sent the pins and needles into my throat; 'but who's talkin' o' partin',' says I, 'sure you must always have some one to look afther the child, and who can do it betther than me?' 'Who indeed,' says my lady.'

"Well, well, by degrees it came out as how the child 'ud soon have to be taught her prayers and her catechism, and that sort o' thing, and so it 'ud be dangerous to have me a-bringin' of her up any longer. The masther couldn't look me in the face, but kep' walkin' up and down with his hands behind his back. My lady was makin' believe over her work, but I knew she was cryin', and then I fell to cryin' myself.

"'John,' says my lady, dropping her 'broidhery, 'if O'Dowd gave us her word of honour never to speak to the child—'

"'If she did, I'd thrust her!' said the masther, comin' straight up to me.

"'Would you now?' says I; 'well then, here it is,' and I pulled out my beads, and swore on the cross at the end of them, as how I'd never spake to you o' the blessed mother o' God, or the saints, or purgatory, or the Pope while I was with you. 'Shake hands with me, O'Dowd,' says the masther, and may-be I didn't! And you know I kep' my word, child," added O'Dowd, solemnly.

"You did, Dowdy, like a good, honest Christian as you are," replied the young girl with affectionate warmth, "and I must have often tried you sorely with my cross questions. Do you remember the day I pulled your rosary out of your pocket, and stamped and cried because you wouldn't tell me what it was, and let me have it to play with?"

"Ay, that I do, and many another question besides; but I kep my word, acushla, I kep my word."

"And your husband, Dowdy? Did he go to America alone?" asked Mabel after a pause.

"He went up afther the boy, your brother, child," replied O'Dowd with a trembling lip; "he'll be sixteen years

gone, come next Michaelmas; just afore you took the measles. God rest his soul!"

O'Dowd was silent, and Mabel, for the first time guessed how fresh the wound still was that she had laid her hand upon so lightly. She kissed the widow tenderly, again and again.

"And to think you've not had a bit to eat, and it sthrikin' ten!" cried O'Dowd, disengaging herself from the soft white arms, as the great bronze clock on the mantelpiece chimed out the hour.

"It's I that ought to be ashamed o' myself, to keep pratin' on like that! Come and take your breakfast, honey; I must be off to see how the misthress is."

CHAPTER VI.

TO Mabel's great surprise, Sir John never once alluded to that strange scene in the library.

"He cannot but think of it," she felt sure, and if so why did he not speak of it? Was he afraid? Yes, he was afraid. Of what? Of some dread revelation that, sooner or later, he felt, must burst upon him; some horrible spectre that lay lurking in the silence he dared not break; some grim phantom of pain and anguish that stood between him and his child. He could not, he would not put a name upon his terror; he would not speak to Mabel, and ask her to dispel it. As yet, it was but a shadow; her answer might change it into a reality.

Mabel, ignorant of the workings of her father's mind, was still vaguely conscious that a crisis was at hand. Some great

event was throwing its shadow over the present, and darkening the future with portentous gloom. The struggle, which for the last four years had been carried on in the inner chamber of her heart, must soon be fought over again, in the full light of day; in the light of her father's anger, his direst displeasure and distress.

Like the Christians of the early Church, who, before the decree had gone forth condemning them to martyrdom, were wont to visit the amphitheatre, and listen to the roar of the wild beasts chained in the vaults below, so did Mabel rehearse in spirit the battle she was soon to fight on a bloodless arena, but for the same cause. Every day, every hour, brought the impending crisis nearer. Where, when, how, would the truth break upon her father? Would they be alone? Would her mother be present?

Sometimes the vision of that pale face with its mild, blue eyes, tearful and imploring, would rise up before Mabel, and paralyse every fibre of her heart.

"No, no," she would cry despairingly, "mamma must not be there!"

Yet Mabel loved her father passionately, and reverenced him to worship; but she felt that his stern anger would be less fatal to her courage than the tears, the pleadings, the tenderness of her mother.

It was not possible that such a conflict going on within should show no trace without. The young girl would sometimes come down to breakfast after a sleepless night, her cheek pale, her eye feverish. Self-conscious and embarrassed, she would try to cover the tell-tale symptoms under an unusual gaiety of manner, laughing and singing as if her heart were blithesome as a lark. Lady Stanhope was duped. Sir John was not.

He had not spoken to his wife on the subject, yet he longed to do so. It would be a relief to him, if she laughed at his fears, as he hoped she would; but then, it was possible she might confirm them.

The suspense was unbearable.

"If there is any ground for anxiety, her mother is more likely to find it out than I am," he said at last, and resolved to go straight to his wife, and casually

draw out her opinion, without, if possible, awakening her suspicions.

Lady Stanhope was somewhere in the grounds. He had seen her, as he sat ruminating in his study, walk towards the shrubbery, leaning on O'Dowd. She seldom walked alone now; a symptom that her husband remarked with growing apprehension.

Mabel was gone out riding with Admiral Oldacre, so her mother was alone, and not likely to be interrupted.

She was sitting on a low garden-chair, under the shade of a chestnut tree, with a book in her hand.

O'Dowd was squatted on the grass, plying her knitting needles beside her mistress. They both looked round as the Baronet's firm tread, and the patter of Pompey's heavy paws, fell on the gravel walk behind them.

"It's the masther!" said O'Dowd, as if her assertion was necessary to convince Lady Stanhope of the fact.

"I hope he doesn't intrude!" bowed Sir John, raising his hat, and waiting to be assured in the negative.

"How do you feel, Florence?" he inquired, pressing the hand Lady Stanhope held out to welcome him.

"Very well, unusually well; this balmy weather will set me up completely, if it lasts a little longer. It feels more like August than the second of October."

"That's the thruth, thin," chimed in O'Dowd, "it'll do a power o' good if it holds up a bit. Wouldn't you sit down awhile, Sir, with my lady? I'll fetch you a chair," and she rolled up her knitting, and laid it on the grass.

"I'll fetch the chair myself, Mrs. O'Dowd, if you'll tell me where to find it," replied the gentleman.

"That an' I won't!" pronounced O'Dowd, decidedly; "you'll be fetchin' nothin' for yourself, as I can fetch for you."

It was an old fashioned prejudice of Sir John's, that a gentleman should never let a woman wait on him, whatever her social inferiority might be. But Mrs. O'Dowd had her prejudices too, and Sir John had a wholesome fear of braving them; so he contented himself with put-

ting in a protest, and submitted to be waited upon against his principles.

"The child has a fine day for her ride," observed O'Dowd, fixing the chair in a shady spot near Lady Stanhope.

"Yes, and she'll enjoy the canter all the more for being a week without it," said the Baronet.

"'Deed an' it's a shame to let her go without it, the darlint."

"That's what comes of growing old, Mrs. O'Dowd," answered the Baronet, shaking his head gravely. "When a young lady has got a gouty papa—"

"Oh! then, if you're goin' to speak unmannerly of my child's father, I'll just say the top o' the mornin' to you!" and O'Dowd, gathering up her belongings, walked off in high dudgeon.

"What a comfort that woman has been to us," said Lady Stanhope, looking after the faithful servant; "what a blessing she is still; so watchful of Mabel, so affectionate, and so devoted to us all!"

"Yes, she's a chip of the old block," observed Sir John, "a specimen of a race that is dying out by degrees. Our grand-

children won't own many servants like O'Dowd, unless their parliamentary reform system does something to stop the deterioration of the race, and prevent the servants riding rough-shod over their masters, as the present generation are learning to do. It all comes of this confounded educational mania, teaching the people everything under the stars, except their duty and their business."

"I wish you were in Parliament, John," said Lady Stanhope, looking fondly at her husband.

She was no politician, but accepted, with wife-like faith, all Sir John's principles and views. There was no doubt, if he took an active part in the legislature of the country, it would be very differently governed.

"I could never have waded through the mire of an electioneering canvass," replied the Baronet, contemptuously; "but, indeed, I don't think Parliament has any great loss. What was in me to do for my country, I did with my sword; as far as I can see it, my duty now lies here, amongst my tenantry."

"Oh! yes, there can be doubt about

that; but talking of Parliament, I suppose this unfortunate affair of Herbert Oldacre's will prevent his standing at the next elections?"

"Very probably. It will be a sad disappointment to the Admiral, he was so proud of the boy; he hoped such great things for him."

"No wonder!" said Lady Stanhope, warmly, "any father might; so brave, so handsome, and so gifted! What a sad falling away his has been!"

"Has Mabel said much to you about it?" asked Sir John, carelessly.

"No, very little. I was anxious at first as to how it might affect her; for to tell you the truth, John, I had been nursing a mother's dream about Herbert; an idle one, happily, as it has turned out."

"And you don't think Mabel shared the dream with you?"

"No, I think not," replied his wife, after some deliberation; "in my short-sighted mistrust of Providence, I have sometimes felt angry with her that she did not. What a blessing the denial of my wish has been to us all!"

"Yes, a most merciful blessing, most merciful!" repeated Sir John. "Has she taken his perversion much to heart from a higher point of view? Did she seem much shocked at it?"

"I can't say exactly. She has expressed far more pity for the father than indignation against the son, and there is a tenderness now in her manner towards the old gentleman that seems to touch him very much."

"And you suspect the son had a weakness for our dark-eyed Mab?"

"Yes; I more than suspect it," replied Lady Stanhope, with a sigh.

"God grant it may be only on Herbert's side!" ejaculated the Baronet, fervently. They were silent awhile. Sir John pulled Pompey's ears, till the meek brute thought it necessary to protest by a low whine, and looked up reproachfully at his master.

Sir John let go the ear, and patted his dog apologetically.

"Florence," he said turning abruptly to his wife, "I'm not apt to be fanciful, am I?"

"Fanciful! my dear John," and Lady

Stanhope opened her gentle blue eyes in astonishment.

"Am I fanciful in thinking that Mabel has changed of late? Grown sad, or—in fact that some sort of a change has come over her?"

Lady Stanhope paused a moment. She had noticed Mabel's looking a little pale and thoughtful latterly, but ascribed it to over-anxiety about her, Lady Stanhope's, health. She was miles away from Sir John's nightmare.

"Yes," she replied, "I have observed that the dear child has grown a little pale, and is sometimes more pensive and silent than she used to be; but Mabel was always given to be more thoughtful than most girls of her age. Then—"

"Then what, Florence?" Sir John's pulse stood still.

Lady Stanhope laid her hand softly on his arm.

"I fear she is fretting about her mother, John."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the husband, unspeakably relieved, and looking tenderly at his wife. "Why, Mab was

saying to me, not long ago, that you had grown stouter, and coughed so much less of late."

"Then the fancifulness is perhaps on my side," replied Lady Stanhope, forcing a laugh.

"Here they come, ridin' down by the heather!" cried a voice from one of the turret windows. "Just hand up my lady to the terrace, masther; it'll do her a power o' good to see the child. It's the pertiest sight from this to Bally-Shannon."

Sir John did as he was told, and agreed with O'Dowd that Mabel looked as lovely as Queen Mab herself, and sat her horse like a fairy princess. She was in high spirits, and seeing her mother and Sir John watching her from the Castle, broke into a canter and came flying up the road, taunting the Admiral for lagging behind.

"Bravo, Mab, bravo!" cried her father proudly, as she drew up beside him, and throwing the reins on the neck of her pretty black mare, held out her arms to be lifted off.

"Yes, Diana; you're going to be praised too," she said, patting the fiery little mare, who pawed the ground and arched her neck coquettishly at the stroke of her mistress's hand, snorting and shaking her mane in acknowledgment of the gentle caress.

"She went so beautifully, papa! Albatross could hardly keep up with her; could he, Admiral?"

"Albatross knows better than to waste his wind tearing alongside a flighty young damsel like Diana;" growled the gentleman.

"Don't mind him, papa!" exclaimed Mabel, as the old sailor swung himself off his heavy limbed charger, "he did his best to make past me, and he couldn't."

"Why don't you pull her ears for her, Oldacre?" asked Sir John, shaking hands with his friend.

"But I want Di to get her due," insisted Mabel. "Just jump up, and let us ride to the gate for a bet, Admiral; I'm not the least tired, neither is Di."

"The deuce you aren't!" grunted the Admiral.

"Not a bit; I'm ready to start again, do, please, we'll ride for a kiss!" she added coaxingly.

"I'd rather have the kiss without the ride!" and the old sailor, catching the laughing face between his strong, brown hands, kissed the young girl's forehead.

"I call that very unfair;" she protested indignantly.

"I call it much better treatment than you deserve, you saucy puss," said Lady Stanhope.

"There's no quarter for you, Mab! If I were you I'd beat a dignified retreat," observed Sir John.

"Yes, so I intend;" replied Mabel, and gathering up her habit, she walked into the hall, with an air of offended dignity.

"By Jove! She is a lovely creature!" cried the Admiral.

"She's a spoilt child, that's what she is," said Lady Stanhope, smiling.

"I was talking of the mare," explained the Admiral bluntly, and he stood, looking after the horses as they were led away to their stables.

Sir John laughed, but his wife looked a little disappointed. She thought the gruff old tar might have made up for her mistake by some pretty little compliment to her child's beauty. But that was not the old tar's way. He never paid a compliment to a woman in his life, he used to say jokingly, except to his wife, when he asked her to marry him.

They were a pleasant party that evening at Stanhope Park. It was the first time since Herbert's departure that Admiral Oldacre had dined from his home. No one but Mabel could have enticed him away from it to-day; but she had a way of cajoling every one into doing her bidding, he said; then it would have been very churlish to deprive the pretty thing of a canter, when she had set her heart on it.

He knew Sir John never allowed his daughter to scour the country with a groom for her escort; not from any want of confidence in her; he would have trusted the daughter of the Stanhopes from one end of the world to the other, over land and sea, as far as that went; but in case of any accident to herself or her saddle,

he did not choose her to be dependent on the courtesy of a stable-boy. Though she was his daughter, Sir John never forgot that she was a gentlewoman, and treated her with a certain chivalrous respect, that sometimes made his manner appear stiff and formal to people of a younger and less rigorous school than that in which the Stanhopes were bred.

The Baronet had of late been troubled with a tinge of the gout; so Mabel was thrown very often on the Admiral's gallantry for an escort in her rides.

Captain Oldacre always joined them when he was at the Grange. Since Mabel's return, his leaves of absence had been so long and so frequent that Lady Stanhope came to the very natural conclusion, for a mother, that there must be some greater attraction in the way than formerly. Who could the magnet be but her Mabel?

We have seen how complacently she looked on the young seaman's pretentions, and how it had pained her to see her hopes so suddenly, so irrevocably crushed.

Herbert had written to Lady Stanhope from Dover, announcing his changed views, and entreating her with touching earnestness not to withdraw from him her friendship, which he valued almost as much as any prize on earth. He had not the courage, he said, to go to the Park before leaving Hampshire, but he could not sail without a word of affectionate farewell. Of his plans for the future he said nothing.

The Admiral told Sir John his son would be absent about a year. His ship, the "Neptune," was bound for the Baltic, and Herbert talked of a cruise, very likely, in the Chinese waters before he sailed westward again.

There was no bitterness, no anger in the old man's tone when he spoke of his son. Herbert was his idol, his darling still. No word of reproach escaped him when he told the Baronet of the sorrow that had fallen upon him. It was a barrier between him and his boy; and Sir John feared that his friend suffered more as a father than as a Christian from his son's treason to the Church.

"Your nephew Clifton is next heir to the Oldacre estates?" observed Sir John, as the gentlemen sauntered out on the terrace after dinner.

"What of him?" demanded the Admiral curtly.

"He'll get a cool welcome from the tenantry, I was thinking; though since it must needs be, he's as good a substitute as could be found, I daresay."

The Admiral turned round and confronted his friend savagely.

"Who says it needs must be?" he demanded fiercely.

"Why, you don't mean to say that, after what has occurred, you will continue to look upon Herbert as the representative of the family?" and Sir John, coming to a stand-still, answered the old sailor's scowl with an eye as unflinching as his own.

"And you mean to say that I'm going to be brute enough to cast off my own son because, forsooth, the lad chose to say his prayers his own way? No, no, Stanhope; Herbert Oldacre is as noble a man, and as brave as ever bore the old name. His

notions and mine don't pull together on one score; but he's gone where his conscience bade him go. All honour to the boy for his truth and his courage!"

Sir John was confounded. "The poor old fool must be gone doating," he thought, and resumed his walk in silence.

"Clifton indeed!" grunted the Admiral with an angry chuckle; "By Jove, that would be a good joke!"

"I'm glad to find Captain Oldacre's dis.....change of creed meets with so much indulgence in your sight; one might almost fancy you approved of it," observed the Baronet sarcastically.

"Approved of it!" roared the Admiral; "approved of it! Mayhap I do, in one sense. I'd rather see the lad a good Romanist than a bad Protestant. If his conscience told him he was a humbug to stay in the Church, he did right to leave it."

"If his conscience told him to marry his kitchen-maid, or to blow his brains out, he would do well to do it, I suppose," sneered the Baronet coolly.

Admiral Oldacre made no answer, but walked on in silence.

"Stanhope!" he cried, after a long pause, and, stopping abruptly, laid his broad hand on his friend's shoulder: "Stanhope, when I was a middy on board the 'Victory,' I got a French bullet through my leg, that split it open like an oyster-shell. They bound it up with splinters, as best they could, and after a while, the blood stopped flowing. They carried me on land next day, and laid me down by the river: it was the Nile. I told the men to leave me for a couple of hours. I didn't want them, and they had a deal to do. By and bye, I fell asleep, dead asleep, and I forgot my wound; I didn't lose it, mind; but I forgot it awhile. When I awoke, there were two Arabs kneeling over me; one was rifling my pockets, while the other held a knife at my throat. I made no attempt at resistance, till one of the rascals laid his hand roughly on my leg. I caught hold of him, with an oath, and signed to him that I was wounded; I suppose he thought it was a dodge to hide some money, for he stripped me, as naked as a dog, and dragged off the dressing, splinters and

all. Then the wound burst open afresh, and the blood gushed out as bad as ever. But they were Arabs, savages; they knew no better."

The Admiral paused, and bent his shaggy brow on the cold stern face of the Baronet.

"Your hand, Oldacre, and your pardon," exclaimed Sir John, "I'm an Englishman, and a Christian . . . . I ought to have known better."

The Admiral grasped the long white hand and wrung it to pain.

"You'll say good night to your wife for me," he said brusquely, pulling out his watch: "I'd better be starting now."

His host made no effort to detain him, and the two walked on together towards the stables.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO months passed, and still that nightmare, suspense, lay heavily on the Baronet's mind.

Twenty times he resolved to question Mabel, and as often some unconquerable fear kept him back. Yet the doubt was growing intolerable. Nothing had occurred to strengthen his suspicions since that first revelation he read, or fancied he read, in her pale face and trembling agitation when he alluded to the impossible event of her doing like Herbert Oldacre.

Yet in spite of himself, the suspicion was gaining strength every day.

Mabel had grown pale and sad of late. He fancied, too, she avoided being alone with him. More than once, on looking up suddenly from his book, he had found her eyes fixed on him with an expression of

tenderness, mixed with pain that was almost agonizing.

Lady Stanhope was far from well. Her cough had been worse since the cold had set in. Her daughter's loving eye could not fail to notice this, and Sir John tried to persuade himself that her altered appearance and drooping spirits had no other cause.

He tried, but it would not do.

Yet he dared not ask the truth.

This brave soldier, who had heard unmoved "the cannon's opening roar," and stood the death-dealing fire of a battlefield, with steady pulse and fearless heart, shrunk like the veriest dastard from this moral ordeal of his courage.

They sat alone, in the large drawing-room, Mabel and he, one evening after dinner. Lady Stanhope had not left her room since the day before; she was suffering from a cold which had increased her cough.

Two tall, antique silver lamps were burning on the consoles in the wide piers, and wax-lights were flaming in the massive chandeliers on the mantel-piece; still from

its great size and height, the room was comparatively dark. The fire was burning brightly, and the blue blaze of the pine logs relieved the gloom, and lighted up the rich colours of the carpet cheerily.

Mabel was singing an Irish melody on the harp: "Has sorrow thy young days shaded?" It was a favourite of Sir John's and she sang it with peculiar pathos.

He closed his Greek Homer and listened. He had never heard her sing so sweetly before, or look so beautiful. She wore a white muslin dress with pink ribbons about it, and a pink rose in her hair. Her father always remembered her in that dress.

He looked at her, as she sat there warbling those plaintive strains, the mellow light of the Etruscan lamps falling on her golden hair, and he wondered if the Peris of Paradise were lovelier than his child.

How pure she looked, how calm, yet what fire there lurked in those deep hazel eyes!

"Could anything so pure ally itself to corruption?" he exclaimed inwardly;

"could anything so true be deceived by falsehood? Forbid it, Heaven!"

The Baronet rose, and as usual with him in moments of deep thought or agitation, paced the room with slow, measured steps.

He threw open the library door. It was in total darkness, except for one clear ray of moonlight that glided obliquely through the eastern window.

Mabel's song was ended. She went on playing with the strings, drawing out sad, wailing minors as she replaced the pedals, modulating the chords with every movement of the foot. She could see her father from where she sat. That solitary moonbeam fell upon his head, turning to silver the steel-grey hair, and making the majestic figure stand out in vivid relief amidst the darkness.

What a noble head it was!

Mabel let the harp fall against her shoulder, and clasped the arm with her right hand. What strength and truth spoke out in every line of the stern profile!

The young girl gazed at the bright outline of the features, and wondered if

the day must come when they would frown upon her, implacable in their severity.

That clear, truthful eye that had never met her but in love—must it one day bend on her in chilling reprobation?

She leaned her head against the harp, and her tears dropped, hot and sharp upon the sounding board.

Sir John turned round from his contemplation of the moonlit landscape, and saw her.

"Mabel!" he said, in a very low voice.

The word startled her as if it had been spoken from the grave; she had never before known what it was to tremble at her father's voice.

The Baronet stood quite still, waiting for her to come to him.

Had he seen her? Would he know she had been crying?

Mabel toyed composedly with the pedals fixing, and unfixing them all again.

She dashed her hand over the strings, making them shriek out a glissando that might have roused every rook in the trees, without, and humming a snatch of some

opera air, walked bravely in to the library.

"I think it's freezing to-night;" she said, going up to the window and talking very rapidly, "how the stars twitter; and the ground looks so white. If it does freeze, I hope it will do it conscientiously; I want to have a skate on the lake. The Admiral promised to come and skate with me as soon as the ice was strong enough."

Sir John sat down in the same seat, where two months ago, O'Dowd had sat and told the story of her darling's childhood; he passed his arm round Mabel's waist and drew her to his knee.

"I believe the Admiral would skate on his head to please you, Mab," he said, stroking her hair fondly.

"Dear old Admiral! he's so good, so kind," exclaimed Mabel.

"You're very fond of him, and very sorry for him, are you not?"

"Yes, father, very."

"Child, you have need to be; he's sorely to be pitied; the more so, that he has let his heart run away with his duty in this matter of Herbert's; he has shown great

weakness towards the young man, unmanly weakness."

"Still, he is his son," pleaded Mabel, twining her arms still closer round her father, and laying her cheek against his forehead; "his only son," she murmured in a soft, low tone.

"If your right eye scandalize you, pluck it out and cast it from you!" spoke the Baronet. There was a cold solemnity in his voice that made the young girl shudder; she nestled closer to him, almost unconscious that she did so. Her breath came and went; his arm was round her, and he could feel her heart throbbing, strong, hot throbs, that almost burned him as they beat against his hand.

Neither spoke, but Sir John felt that the moment had come; the crisis that for months he had dreaded, when the veil must be snatched away, and he must look the spectre in the face.

Perhaps Mabel felt it too.

The deep swollen current of her father's terror was flowing noiselessly from his own heart into hers.

He was loosening his hold of her, gradu-

ally the sheltering arm drew back, and fell slowly and heavily at his side.

Mabel clasped her hands together till pressure left them bloodless, and strained herself against that strong, broad breast with all the strength of love and of despair.

She knew that once cast from that resting place, no power on earth could bring her back to it. But she would not let him cast her from it; she would cling to him while she had life left.

They sat there, the father and child, in the white moonlight, silent and breathless; silent, except for the wild throbbing of the two hearts that cried up to Heaven in their mute agony.

Sir John was cold and passive in her passionate embrace. He did not trust himself to speak.

A convulsive sob broke from Mabel, but she clung to him still with the tenacity of despair.

"My God! my God! has it come to this?" groaned at length the wretched father, as he felt the frail form quiver and heave upon his breast; "have my blessings

and my prayers brought down this curse—"

"Oh! father!" she shrieked, and loosening her grasp, fell at his feet.

The Baronet started up!

Oh! Mabel, why did you let him go? With that warm breath upon his cheek, with that heart throbbing against his heart, his own could not have closed against you. But now, he stands erect, the spell is broken.

Sir John, before the judgment seat of his pitiless, self-immolating conscience, thanked Heaven that it was so; he was a man again and a Christian—ay, he was a Christian, and as such it behove him to cast from the shelter of his love that frail young maiden clinging to his knees.

She had deserted her God; she had gone over to His enemies; she had perjured herself in the face of Heaven; it behoved him, as a Christian, to pluck her from his side, and cast her from him.

He stood, hard and firm as a rock, looking at her.

He was a man and a Christian, and he would not belie himself; he would do his

duty; but it was a terrible thing, this plucking out of his right eye, this cutting off of his right hand!

"Mabel, speak to me; tell me this is horrible dream; bid me wake from it, my child, bid me wake from it!"

There was no answer, but the great sobs that shook her fiercely from head to foot.

The Baronet broke from her with a wrench.

"Then my worst fears have proved too true," he said in a hollow voice, "you are a Catholic!"

"Yes, father, in heart and soul I am a Catholic!"

Sir John struck his open hand upon his forehead, as if to shut out the answer from his brain. If the lightning had blasted his child where she knelt, no word of impious murmuring would have poisoned his grief; but now, something too like a curse hissed through his clenched teeth; a curse, not against Mabel, but against Heaven.

It was the delirium of a moment.

The spasm passed away, and left him cowed and self-possessed again.

He felt that threats, persuasion, and argument would be alike useless. The deed was done, and Mabel was not one to do it lightly. Still, he would leave no chance untried.

"You have foreseen the consequences of this step," he said coldly, "there is no need of explanation between us. You know what I must consider my duty in such a case, and you know I will not play coward to my conscience. I give you till to-morrow to reflect, and then you must decide upon your own fate. Either you return, penitent and humble, to the faith of your fathers, or you leave my house and my heart for ever."

"I am ready to die for the true faith of the living God," answered Mabel solemnly.

"I would save you against yourself, I would stand between you and perdition—" the Baronet's breath was failing him, perhaps his heart too; he stretched out his hand towards the prostrate girl, "Henceforth, Mabel Stanhope, you are no child of mine."

"Father! for my mother's sake, hear me and be merciful!" she cried, and rising

from her knees attempted to regain her hold of him; but he waved her from him with a gesture she dared not disobey. "My good, my kind, my noble father! listen to me before you cast me off. As God judges me this moment, I would give up my life rather than your blessing and your love. But even for you I could not give up my hope of Heaven. I could not be deaf to the voice of God. Oh! father, let me tell you how I have prayed, how I have suffered, how I..."

"May God, in His great compassion, forgive you, unhappy, infatuated child!" broke in her father. "He alone can show mercy to such sin as yours. Go and pray to Him through this night. If in His wise mercy He be deaf to your prayer for a time, you must go forth and learn the lesson His justice bids me teach you; you must go from the home your falsehood has dishonoured, from the hearts your perjury will have broken; you must go till He calls you back into His arms and mine!"

The words were spoken slowly, heavily, with an irrevocable purpose; a resolve

that no human effort could shake. Mabel heard them as the criminal hears his death-warrant.

She had expected some such sentence all along, and had schooled herself to meet it courageously, if not calmly. Now that the *fiat* had gone forth, she felt her courage rise.

He might cast her from him, but there was another refuge open to her. There was another Father, Who would gather to His heart with a love passing all earthly love.

"Father," she answered humbly, "I will obey you, for I have sinned against you, but not against Heaven."

Sir John turned from her in silence, and walked on into the drawing-room. Mabel moved a few steps after him.

"May I go to mamma for a moment?" she asked timidly.

"You will do well to spare your mother any unnecessary excitement," he replied harshly.

"I would only say good night, and ask for her blessing," pleaded his daughter in a choking voice.

"To-morrow, if you are worthy of it, her blessing shall not be denied you."

He walked slowly to the door, and paused, his hand upon the lock, then turned suddenly round and held out his arms.

Mabel sprang into them, and buried her face in his bosom.

Long, close, silent, like a lover's last farewell, was the father's embrace.

He crushed her into his heart, madly, passionately, till she almost gasped for breath. Then with a stifled sob, thrust her from him, and rushed out of the room.

Mabel fell upon her knees and prayed; prayed as those only can pray who have nothing left but prayer to lean upon. She rose, strengthened and consoled.

In looking back upon that night, she often marvelled how prompt and supernatural the answer to her prayer had been. There is a strength in sacrifice we little ween of.

Sir John, on leaving his daughter, had gone to look for O'Dowd; not finding her in her room, which was close to Mabel's, he desired the groom of the chambers to send her to Miss Stanhope.

The man replied that Mrs. O'Dowd was with her ladyship.

The Baronet went at once to his wife's apartments. She had been sitting up for an hour or two in her boudoir. O'Dowd had just assisted her into bed again, and had gone down to the housekeeper's room to prepare an objectionable mess called gruel, for her mistress to take before settling down for the night. Hervey, Lady Stanhope's own maid, was tidying away her ladyship's "things."

"Will you be good enough to tell Mrs. O'Dowd that Miss Stanhope wants her," said Sir John.

The woman obeyed immediately; that is to say, she left the room, concluding in her own mind that the master had something to say to my lady, and that *she* was in the way. Mrs. O'Dowd was as good an excuse as any other for getting rid of her.

Hervey put her ear to the door and listened. She heard Sir John stir the fire, and say something about a good night's rest.

Then he walked up and down the room, and she could hear no more.

"He's a long time bringing it out," thought Hervey; still she felt satisfied that there was something to bring out. It had not escaped her that Sir John looked very pale.

The drawing-room door opened, and a light step fell on the stairs.

The eaves-dropper stole quickly down the corridor, and disappeared by the back stairs to the kitchen.

Mabel had asked the servant in the hall to send Mrs. O'Dowd to her, and the man replied, as before, that she was with my lady.

The young girl went upstairs, and stood listening at her mother's door.

The Baronet's slow, firm step was still pacing to and fro. She heard no voices, but his presence there was voice enough.

Pressing her hand tightly on her heart, she passed on quickly to her own room.

"He bid me come and pray—pray through the night!" she murmured, sinking into a chair, "and then, and then—oh! God! in thy great mercy, forsake me not!"

Her bosom ached, her brain reeled.

She felt the pressure of her father's arm still round her. Her heart felt drunk with the gushing tenderness that had flooded it in that passionate embrace. Dare she trust herself to the ordeal again? Would her new-born faith hold out against the mighty force of her father's love? Had she strength to battle with the giant?

Conscience, speak out!

"No, I dare not trust myself," cried the agitated girl, "I could have braved his anger, his reproaches, his scorn, anything but his love. Let him clasp me once more to his heart, and—Heaven have pity on me!"

Her whole soul rose up within her in a cry for strength to the Giver of all strength.

There was but one course open to her, she must fly—that very night, that hour. She must not meet her father again. She had no distinct notion of where, or how she was to make her escape, but it must be done, and promptly.

Of course she could take no luggage.

There was a silver-mounted travelling-bag, that her father had brought her from

London; that would hold the few things indispensable to her personal convenience.

She packed it hurriedly, putting in two or three household gods; her mother's picture and Sir John's; the letters they had written to her when she was at Belle-Vue. Any jewels of value she had were with Lady Stanhope's in the fire-proof plate-room; Sir John kept the key himself.

Her stock of money was not large; it was near the close of the quarter. Mabel had luckily not been spending much lately. On counting out her little store, she found it amounted to nearly forty pounds.

It seemed very little to start off on a journey with. What journey? Where was she going?

The young girl had looked forward to the crisis that had come to-night, and in her calmer moods had fixed on Paris as the best place for her to take refuge in, partly because it was a great way off, and she had some previous knowledge of it, but principally because it was a Catholic city, and would afford her greater facility than any other for the practice of her new faith.

It was only in moments of unusual depression, that such an alternative seemed at all probable that she should fly from her home, or be banished by Sir John in his stern anger.

Her father might threaten terrible things, as he had done to-night, but Mabel, in the bottom of her heart, believed the threat would never be carried out. Supposing his Roman virtue and iron justice should hold out at first against his love, Lady Stanhope was at hand; she would never see her child cast from her to face the world and buffet with its waves.

But how different was the aspect of things now! She must fly without being able even to take leave of her mother. Never, in her darkest forebodings, had Mabel foreseen anything so cruel as this.

Within the last four months, she had resolved a score of times to tell Lady Stanhope of the step she had decided upon taking, after two long years' of struggle, and try to enlist her pity, her protection; but her mother's health had of late been so delicate, she sank so wearily after the least exertion, that Mabel recoiled from

the shock she knew the confession would be to the invalid.

How bitterly she regretted it now!

Surely, the truth from her own lips would have been less fatal to her mother, than this sudden and cruel revelation of it!

As she packed her little travelling-bag, all these thoughts were crowding on her mind.

Even to Dowdy she must not say good-bye. It was very hard, but it was better so. Her courage wanted bracing just then. This utter isolation did the work better than sympathy or tenderness.

She changed her fleecy, white evening dress for a dark silk one, and a rich velvet cloak made in the last Paris fashion. Mabel chose it because it was warm and light, and she had a long walk before her. She looked amongst her bonnets, to see which was the least unfit for the emergency. There was one delicate green velvet; all the others were flimsy, soap-bubbles of tulle and crape.

She always wore a hat about the grounds; a pretty black beaver, with a drooping

feather. For travelling, it would be more convenient, less remarkable, perhaps, than the light green bonnet; so she decided on the hat.

One last look round the room.

She had forgotton nothing; nothing, at least, that it was possible for her to take. Her figure was reflected from half a dozen mirrors, as she stood, in her Spanish hat and black silk dress, against the pale blue hangings of the elegantly-furnished room.

It had been fitted up for her as a surprise on her return from school. Every luxury that refined taste and wealth could suggest was there; yet, pervading all, was that indescribable character that a room always takes from the person who inhabits it.

Mabel's had every thing to make it luxurious, yet in spite of the silken hangings and glittering mirrors, there was an atmosphere of simplicity and purity, almost of holiness, in this room, where she had dwelt, and slept, and prayed.

She turned from it without a pang. What did it signify where she lived henceforth, or what she left, since she must

leave her mother, and . . . . ; but this was dangerous ground to be treading on.

She crossed the landing hastily.

All was silent on the stairs.

Mabel stopped again at her mother's door. She heard her father's step still pacing up and down. Some one moved a chair. It was probably Dowdy. Poor Dowdy, if she only knew!

The young girl dropped on her knees, and pressed her lips against the dumb, senseless panels of the door; that door that shut in all she loved on earth!

She stooped down and kissed the mat on which her mother had stepped so often; she would find that kiss under her foot to-morrow.

Then she rose, with a strong effort, and gained the hall. The servants had left it. They were gone to prepare the tea-tray, no doubt. She was glad of this.

Then there came over her a longing to rush once more into the drawing-room and look at it.

There was a moment's hesitation: only a moment's. No, this would not do. She

must grasp her pilgrim's staff, and be out upon the high road.

The heavy bolt was drawn back, and Mabel Stanhope found herself outside her father's door.

Sir John felt a strange shudder creep over him. He left his wife's room, and went down stairs.

The hall was quite silent. It was a lofty, dark hall, with gothic arches thrown across the roof, and gloomy, cathedral looking windows on either side of the high gothic door.

The Baronet crossed the marble pavement, and entered the drawing-room.

The library door was open, just as he had left it half an hour ago; he went in, and stood at the eastern window.

Something bounded past him, and down the avenue. It was Pompey.

Sir John looked out, far amongst the chestnut trees, and saw the dog disappear near the lodge gate.

He fancied he heard the gate clang.

It could only be fancy; who could be going out at that time of night?

Then all was still, except for the loud

wailing of the dog, that rent the night air with his cries.

The watcher from the eastern window, stood gazing out into the darkness, like one transfixed.

Why did his hound keep baying at the moon with that piteous sound?

Was it in sympathy with the great sorrow that had fallen on his master?

The strong man's pride broke down; all that night he watched there alone, and wrestled with his agony.

And Mabel, the beautiful child, was she gone?

Yes, she was gone. Frail in body, but stout at heart, she bent her way along the lonely road, and from out the star-lit heavens, there came a voice floating from afar: "Onwards, upwards, Excelsior!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHERE am I going to?"

Mabel halted as she came to a hilly point in the road, with the wild heather stretching out on one hand, and Stanhope Park on the other, and for the first time since the Park gate had closed on her, asked herself, "Where am I going to?"

The Grange was hardly an hour's walk from where she stood. Every door in the old house would fly open to welcome her. But its master was from home. He had been sent for two days ago, to attend a meeting of the Lords of the Admiralty in London; she could not go to the Grange in his absence.

There were plenty of farm houses where she might have passed the night, but her pride shrank from asking hospitality, under such circumstances, at the door of any dependent of Sir John's.

It was a fine, bright night, bitterly cold, but bright as the brightest moon could make it. Mabel looked at her watch. It was past ten.

The last up-train from Foxham started at midnight. She knew that, because her father had sometimes taken it, and friends staying at the Park often did in fine weather.

It would be a sharp walk to catch it, but she did not care about that. Rather liked it. The excitement and rapid movement would be a relief.

Foxham was at the other side of Stanhope Park. Mabel turned and retraced her steps, walking very quickly.

The ground was frozen, so that her footfall resounded clear and loud along the silent road.

She came close by the gate again, Pompey was crouching under it, still howling piteously. At the noise of her step he stopped, and set up a loud joyous bark.

Mabel's heart thumped desperately against her arm. She longed to put her hand through the iron bars, and pat the faithful brute; but there was no time to

be lost, nor what was more precious than time, courage. She quickened her step and ran past the gate, and a long way farther. Then stopped, panting for breath, and leaned against the Park wall.

It was a long, fagging walk to Foxham, and the cold was intense; but she did not halt once again, till within sight of the station when the red lamps of the train came gleaming through the darkness.

It was twenty minutes to twelve.

Mabel had no idea how long it would take to walk, and had run great part of the way. She was out of breath, and rested outside for a few minutes before going in to take her ticket.

Everybody knew her from the station-master to the engine driver.

It had always seemed quite natural for a levy of officials to rush forward, opening doors and placing chairs, when she had gone to Foxham with her father or Lady Stanhope; but it distressed her unspeakably now, all this civility. If they wouldn't make such a fuss and worry her! Why could she not get her ticket like anybody

else, without being bored and bowed to by half a dozen officials?

They stared at her so; she had never seen the Foxham people uncivil before! It was a great relief when at last she found herself alone in the carriage.

The train reached London at half-past three.

Mabel called a cab at the Victoria station, and desired the man drive to the Arundel. She had stopped there twice with her parents.

Her appearance at such an hour, with no luggage, unattended and unannounced, was too extraordinary an event not to cause both surprise and curiosity. But she was respectfully welcomed, and treated with as much deference as if a whole suite of retainers had come in her train. It was no affair of the Arundel's, what Miss Stanhope's business might be in London. Her father honoured the hotel with his patronage, and his daughter had a right to its best services.

Mabel was shown to a handsome bedroom. She wanted no refreshment; "except sleep," she added mentally. Sleep!

there was little chance of her getting any that night.

The young girl threw herself, without undressing, on the bed, and lay quite still.

She felt very tired; it was pleasant to rest after that long walk and the three and half hours' journey in the train. The quiet was pleasant after the shrieking and hissing and panting of the engine.

By-and-bye the lids drooped, and she fell asleep.

It was still dark when she awoke. The clock was striking seven.

Mabel started up. For a moment she could hardly collect her thoughts. The strange bed, her travelling dress that she had slept in; what did it all mean? It meant that she was alone, an outcast, a wanderer.

She struck a light hastily, and plunged her face into a basin of cold water. The shock refreshed and strengthened her. She felt faint, and a little hungry, it was too early to ask for anything to eat; it seemed so quiet in the house. She would wait till some stir in the adjoining rooms

gave her courage to ring for the chambermaid.

It was not long till the rattling of cups and saucers caught her ear. Mabel opened the door, and saw a waiter taking in a tray to one of her neighbours.

"Will you be good enough to send me some breakfast," she said to the man.

"Yes, ma'am, directly.

The breakfast was brought, tea and bread and butter. Mabel eat with more appetite than she could have believed possible.

It was a dry, cold morning; not clear and bright as in Hampshire, but a tolerably fine morning for London.

On leaving Paris, Olga Czerlinska had asked Mabel to take a parcel to a friend of hers staying at a convent near Kensington. Mabel remembered the address, for Sir John had had some trouble in finding it out.

She resolved to go there now, and claim the advice and protection of the nuns. There was not a single Catholic in London to whom she could apply, so this seemed the only door open to her.

She desired the maid to order a fly for her immediately. It never occurred to Miss Stanhope that a cab would be less expensive, and consequently more suitable to her present finances.

Poor child! she had more things than economy to learn in her battle with life, but perhaps no lesson harder or more unpalatable.

It was the first time Mabel had ever spoken to a nun, and she felt a little nervous when the door opened, and the Superioress made her appearance.

But her timidity was soon put to flight by the unaffected kindness of the lady.

She heard our heroine's story without interrupting her.

It was simply told, and in few words.

Mabel did not enlarge on the sacrifice she was making. It had no merit in her own eyes. She was too single-hearted to measure and weigh her own heroism against the gold of the sanctuary. Her conscience had spoken, and she had done its bidding.

Her object in troubling the reverend lady was, first, to ask instruction as to

how she was to be received into the Catholic Church, and then, to request her advice as to the best step to be taken in her new career.

The first question was easily answered, the second required more thought.

"I know nothing of Paris," observed the Superioress, when Mabel had unfolded her plans, "but it seems to me hardly a desirable place for one so young, and circumstanced as you are. Have you any friends there?"

"Yes, I have one friend who would do anything on earth for me. I *think* she is in Paris; she wrote to me from there, about two months ago."

Mabel was thinking of Miss Jones.

"My dear young lady, it is a great risk to run with no surer guarantee than this. Where do you intend staying when you arrive in Paris?"

"At Madame St. Simon's, where I finished my education. I count very much on her. If she cannot employ me as English governess in her own house, I have no doubt she will be able to procure me lessons."

"Oh, that makes *all* the difference!" replied the nun approvingly; "I think you are quite right in fixing on Paris; with such protection as that, you will have nothing to fear."

This point settled, it was arranged that Mabel should spend two or three days at the convent to prepare for the solemn act she was about to accomplish before proceeding to Paris.

Mother Angela, as the Superioress was called, advised her young protégée to write to Sir John Stanhope from the convent, and tell him what she intended doing. It would hardly be dutiful to leave the country without his knowledge and consent. Then the good nun thought it more than probable that he might call her back to him, or at least forbid her putting a still greater distance between them.

Mabel shook her head sadly when Mother Angela hinted at this possibility.

"You do not know my father," she said with a mournful smile. "He would lay down his life for me; but not to save mine, would he forego one iota of what he believes to be his duty."

"Then you must pray unceasingly, my child, that God may enlighten him as to what his duty is," said Mother Angela impressively.

She alluded to the chance of Lady Stanhope's influence softening her husband towards his child, and causing him to look more leniently on her misdeed; but Mabel burst into such uncontrollable grief at the mention of her mother's name, that the Superioress laid her hand tenderly on the young girl's head, and left her alone to wrestle with her sorrow.

It was the kindest thing she could do. After a time, Mabel recovered herself, and sat down to write.

Her letter to Sir John was firm, but affectionate and dutiful, as if nothing had occurred to separate them. She asked his blessing, and his forgiveness for the pain she was causing him. Told how kindly the sisters at Kensington had received her, and concluded by stating her intention of going to Paris, where she would place herself under Madame St. Simon's protection, till some other course was open to her, provided

always Sir John did not disapprove of her leaving England.

Of the possible necessity of earning her bread, Mabel said nothing.

In the first place, she feared it might be construed into something like a defiance of her father, or at best, a desire to shew herself independent of him; and in the next place, she did not believe he would leave her in a position to make it necessary. She was prepared, however, for the worst. If he chose to make poverty a portion of her punishment, she would bear it courageously. For the present, she merely informed him that she had sufficient money to defray all her immediate expenses.

To her mother, Mabel wrote at greater length. The paper was covered with blots and stains. It was written as much with tears as with ink. Poor child! she might have spared herself that half-hour's extra anguish. Lady Stanhope never saw the letter. Sir John considered it his duty to consign it to the flames of the library-fire, and spare his wife the pain of reading it.

They passed quickly, those three days of

seclusion and peace. It was an unlooked for consolation, and Mabel was very grate-for it. The calm, prayerful atmosphere of the convent rested and refreshed her; the over-wrought spirit was soothed, and the heart braced for the struggle on which it was entering.

It seemed to Mabel that no battle could dismay her after that which she had fought. She had realized one sacrifice that her conversion might involve, and that had been made.

What did the rest signify?

She knew not, in her untried courage, how the strength which has borne us triumphant through a great battle, may sometimes, betray us in a petty one.

No answer came from Sir John, at least no letter; but Mabel knew that hers had reached him, by the appearance of her trunks next day at the convent.

They contained such of her dresses and clothing as were wearable in her present circumstances. Of course it was Dowdy who packed them, and Mabel almost expected to see her emerge, bodily, from some crevice or drawer in the two large

trunks. But they were both emptied, and no Dowdy appeared.

Mabel gave herself the unnecessary fatigue of taking out every separate article, and packing them over again, with a vague idea that somebody or something would turn up when she came to the bottom. If not Dowdy in the flesh, at least some living token of her.

But nothing turned up, not even a letter.

She did not know that the Castle was upside down, packing its own trunks; that Lady Stanhope had grown suddenly worse the night of her daughter's flight, and that the medical men, summoned in haste from London, had made it a *sine qua non* of her possible recovery, that the invalid should be carried off at once to a warm climate. The cold should be risked, everything should be risked to get her to Italy before the last winds finished what the fogs had so terribly begun.

We must not attempt to describe the confusion and horror that ensued on the discovery of Mabel's flight.

She was not missed till the following

morning, when O'Dowd knocked at her door for admission. Receiving no answer, she opened it noiselessly to see if the child slept.

It was the nurse's habit to come and bid her good night, while Mabel was going through her toilet, but Lady Stanhope's indisposition had occupied O'Dowd till late on that eventful evening. When Mabel's own maid went to her door at half-past ten, she was not much surprised to hear no answer bidding her "come in."

Her young mistress was sometimes wont to sit up reading or writing after retiring to her room, and would undress without calling for the assistance of her maid. So the girl told Mrs. O'Dowd, when she went down to the housekeeper's room, that Miss Mabel was most likely asleep, for she had knocked and got no answer. Mrs. O'Dowd observed, "then I won't disturb the child," and so it came about that the fugitive was not missed till the following day.

Lady Stanhope was kept in ignorance of the event. O'Dowd said, the child had a cold, and was in bed for the day.

Sir John was beside himself with terror. Mabel had no doubt fled to some Catholic shelter. There was none in the neighbourhood, that he knew of. Could she have gone to London? He started at once to Foxham, and ascertained that she had gone up by the midnight train.

Her letter soon came to relieve him from the horrible anxiety which her flight had caused.

We will draw a veil over the scene which followed between the husband and wife.

Sir John broke the news as gently as he could, softening the blow by every argument in his power.

The separation was not to be irrevocable. Mabel would return to them purified by the trial. She was in safe keeping, and he would see that she wanted for nothing.

Sir John spoke of three months as the farthest limit of the probationary exile.

Lady Stanhope was too sure of her husband's superior virtue and judgment to oppose her own against either. The mother's heart did cry out, wildly, despairingly, at first. But she was a Christian mother. If her child's salvation was

at stake, must not all human tenderness be silenced to secure it?

All this, Sir John urged, gaining courage for himself in his efforts to impart it to his wife.

A great lesson should be taught, everything should be done to make their unhappy child see in its true light the terrible nature of her sin. In flying from them herself, she had spared her parents the cruel necessity of choosing any mode of chastisement for her Providence had, no doubt, thus guided events in merciful consideration for his weakness.

The Christian's conscience might have quailed before the father's heart.

Lady Stanhope listened, and bowing her head to a Higher will than her husband's, submitted.

O'Dowd was not so easily dealt with.

The cause from which Lady Stanhope drew her strength of severity, was no cause at all to O'Dowd.

While the mother wept for sorrow, the nurse wept for joy.

Strange that Sir John had never, for one instant, cast a thought upon O'Dowd,

as in any way connected with Mabel's perversion!

It had never occurred to him that she would have betrayed his confidence, or tampered with the faith of his child. And he judged her right.

She would have laid her head upon the block, to have brought about what had come to pass that day, to have seen her darling baptized a Catholic; but she had never, by a word or act, sought to turn the young girl's mind to such a result.

The good creature's joy was too *naïve* in its astonishment, too great, too genuine to let those who saw her, doubt for a moment that she was as much taken by surprise as any one in the family.

She cried and laughed all at once; scolding Sir John, and blessing Providence by turns.

"Sure, an' it's a great day for us all!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands, and rocking to and fro on her knees beside Lady Stanhope's bed, "th' angels is makin' merry over it in Heaven, an' th' Archangels is playin' tunes, fit to send th' Apostles dancing, St. Pether an' all!"

Both master and mistress were too well acquainted with her ways and words to be either angry or astonished at the tone she took. Her first idea was, of course, to start off after "the child."

Sir John put his veto on this. Mabel was in a convent, where her wardrobe would be forwarded to her.

"Oh then, that's good news!" cried the nurse. "She'll be looked afther, an' made a pet of, bless her! But sure she'll want some one to mind her all the same, and to see to her little duds, the darlint! Won't I be off to her at the convent?"

"Lady Stanhope is too much in need of your care at present, Mrs. O'Dowd," replied Sir John; "she cannot do without you, and Miss Stanhope can."

"Ah then, now, an is'nt it a shame for you, sir, to be 'missin'' your own child like that?" broke out O'Dowd resentfully.

"You will allow me to be best judge of my own speech. There is a point which, even privileges such as yours may not pass," observed the Baronet haughtily, and left the room.

The mother and nurse remained alone;

discussing what was to be sent to Mabel. Her wardrobe was too well supplied to make any new additions necessary, so the trunks were despatched that evening to Kensington.

She had said, in her letter to Sir John, that her purse was well filled for the present, and the Baronet had announced his intention of forwarding Mabel an unlimited cheque on his banker for any future wants.

He said nothing of her proposed journey to Paris, which he approved of, as it would be, in reality, bringing her nearer to him, than if she remained in England; but he forbade both his wife and O'Dowd to write, or hold any communication with Mabel until such time as he deemed fit. Their silence must be a mark of his displeasure, and a part of her punishment.

Neither dared disobey the order, not even O'Dowd; so Mabel searched in vain for a letter in her silk and linen belongings.

CHAPTER IX.

THE steamer ploughed her way through the water. The breeze was fresh, and the sea rough; but although the deck was wet from the splashing of the waves, Mabel preferred it to the shelter of the close, crowded cabin.

She kept her place near the helm, watching the pilot as he steered the vessel so easily, so steadily through the heavy, chopping sea; and gazing at the big, crested waves as they rolled towards her, and dashed themselves into foam against the sides of the ship.

She was the only lady on deck, almost on board. There were several women downstairs, but there was not one whom Mabel felt drawn to speak to; they were for the most part milliners and maids; the former going to replenish their stock

of bonnets and caps, the latter to look for situations.

She drew her tartan close round her, and sat there by herself.

There were two or three gentleman in mackintoshes, lolling over the sides of the steamer, and puffing cigars. One enterprising individual made frantic efforts to keep his footing on the slippery deck, which he would make into a parade ground, catching at the steersman or the chimney, or whatever came in his way when his legs threatened to bring his head in contact with the deck.

The catastrophe was at one moment so imminent, that Mabel, who had been expecting it for some time, and wondering how he contrived to evade it so long, gave a short scream. It was almost a disappointment to her when she saw him secure his footing for the twentieth time, by making a dart at one of the mackintoshes deep in Bradshaw.

The round-about pedestrian looked so good-humouredly ludicrous, that she regretted the amusement his misfortune would have afforded her. It was a little

bit malicious, but Mabel had been straining herself up to a pitch of endurance that made her feel heartless and wicked in her own eyes. She had been waiting for the little roly-poly man to tumble and roll along the deck, and had been mentally indulging her sense of humour on the scene. He had disappointed her, and she felt aggrieved.

But the roly-poly man gave a different interpretation to her scream; he thought she was alarmed for his safety, and having thoroughly steadied himself by aid of the shoulder of the disgusted mackintosh, he made his way by short tacks across to where Mabel was seated.

"Von diable bad passage, Mademoiselle," he began, sitting down by the young lady, who had evinced such flattering nervousness on his account.

"Oui, Monsieur," she replied shortly, and looked out very intently towards the horizon.

"Vous êtes Française!" cried roly-poly, his round eyes in a twinkle of delight.

"Non, Monsieur; I answered you in

French almost without knowing it," she replied in the same language.

"*Sapristi!* but you speak it like Mademoiselle Rachel. You have been educated in France?"

"Oui, Monsieur."

"*Diable*! if it were not for your *peau blanche* and your golden hair, you might pass for a *Française née*. Perhaps you were born in France, eh?"

"Non, Monsieur," was again the laconic reply, with a haughty curve of the short upper lip.

What did this vulgar man mean by his insolent curiosity? How dare he speak to her in this way?

"Non, Monsieur; oui, Monsieur," muttered the vulgar man internally; "can the *belle petite* say nothing more?—Your father and mother are on board, no doubt," he added aloud.

The blood rose to Mabel's cheek and brow; she turned her dark eye with its proud flash full upon the questioner.

"Non, Monsieur; je suis seule!"

He read grief rather than pride in the trembling lip and sudden flush.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, je comprends."

The Frenchman raised his hat, and bowed low before the orphan.

He troubled her with no more questions, and by-and-bye, balancing himself dexterously with his umbrella and the parapet railing, he resumed his gymnastics up and down the deck, plunging to the right and to the left, slipping backwards and forwards, but always holding his ground.

Mabel was no longer in a mood to be amused by his evolutions. She understood the meaning of his sudden change of manner. It touched her to the heart, but she did not care to undeceive him: that would have necessitated a conversation, and she was glad to be left alone.

Her thoughts, in spite of herself, went back homewards. She had resolved they should not, and had kept them down with all the strength of her resolute will; but a gentle word, a kind look from a vulgar stranger, had shattered the rickety gate to pieces. She leaned over the railing, and her tears fell, fast and hot, into the brine below.

It did her good to cry. She had been

keeping in those tears till they burned and scalded her heart.

The little roly-poly cast his eye towards the beautiful *orpheline* every now and then. He saw the sobs shaking her slight figure, and the tears streaming down the fair, pale cheek, left bare by the round Spanish hat.

"Poor little one! I have pained her; I am *un animal!*" he muttered in angry self-reproach.

The steamer was making into port. The cabins emptied themselves on to the deck; all was bustle and excitement.

A pleasant thing it is, that escape from the rolling planks to *terra firma*.

The pier was crowded with eager faces; signals were made to those on board, and answered by waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

Mabel sat quietly watching it all.

There was nobody waiting for *her;* she need not press and hurry with the crowd, crushing on to the gangway.

She was glad the voyage was over; most people are. There is something satisfactory in being landed at one's des-

tination, even when the journey has been pleasant, and the landing point is dubiously so.

The little roly-poly man kept his eye on Mabel. Evidently she expected no one to meet her.

"Pauvre petite, elle a le cœur gros," he thought.

Nothing daunted by his recent snub, he went up to her, this time with less jauntiness in his manner, and holding his hat in his hand.

"If I can be good for anything to Mademoiselle, I am at her orders," he said, respectfully.

He was not going to be snubbed again. Mabel was remorseful for her former harsh rebuff, and made amends for it by being very gracious now.

"Thank you," she replied; "I want nothing, except a cab when we land. I shall be very much obliged if you will get me one."

"Parfaitement," bowed roly-poly; "et les petits paquets de Mademoiselle?"

"I have nothing but this," pointing to the travelling-bag on her arm. "My lug-

gage is registered on to Paris, so I need not trouble you about that."

"What a *vilaine traversée* we have had. I never remember a more unpleasant one," observed the dumpling.

"It is the second time I have crossed," replied his companion.

"*Dame!* you are a famous sailor for such an inexperienced one."

"We islanders generally are."

The passengers were nearly all landed.

Mabel and her guardian, as he had constituted himself, walked up the narrow gangway.

"Stay here, Mademoiselle, while I call a *fiacre*."

Mabel did as she was told.

The Frenchman was back in a minute. He handed Mabel into the cab, jumped in after her, banged the *portière*, and cried to the coachman, "Au chemin de fer!"

It was all done so rapidly, Mabel had no time to protest, if she had been inclined to do so, which she was not.

It was very good-natured of roly-poly to take care of her, and save her the trouble of running out amongst the crowd

to shout for a cab. He thought she was an orphan, alone in the world, and he pitied her.

They were soon whirled to the station. The Frenchman insisted on her taking a *bouillon.*

"Nothing stands to one like the *bouillon,*" he declared; "cela vous remonte le moral."

The twenty minutes' halt was soon over, and the train, puffing and snorting, moved on.

Roly-poly had ensconced himself in the same carriage with Mabel, putting her in the snuggest corner, and wrapping his railway-rug round her feet.

Bon gré, mal gré, she had to submit.

He didn't want it, and Mademoiselle looked cold.

It was all done so simply, so bluntly, that Mabel had no pretext for repelling his civility. There was not a tinge of gallantry in the stranger's manner.

She was alone, *pauvre enfant;* he would be *un animal* if he did not offer her his services.

Whether he would have been quite so

ardent about it, if the *enfant* had been an ugly one, we cannot say. But it is only fair to give the little Frenchman the benefit of the doubt.

After a time, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and fell asleep.

Mabel was left to her reflections.

She was glad there was some one who would be kind to her when she reached Paris. The little man snoring in the corner would see to her luggage, and put her safe into a cab.

Mabel had never faced a crowd alone in her life, and she had a morbid horror of coming in contact with officials.

This good-natured Frenchman would stand between her and the custom-house Philistines. It was not quite right, perhaps, to leave him under the impression that she was an orphan; it seemed like stealing his kindness under false pretences; but to undeceive him must force from her an amount of confidence Mabel shrank from volunteering to a stranger.

What would he think of her father and mother? No, she could not speak of her-

self, or her concerns. It was no affair of this man's. She should never meet him again, once they parted at the Paris terminus.

"Déjà!" cried the sleeper, bouncing up, as an official shook him roughly, and demanded his ticket.

"Enfin!" murmured Mabel, with a sensation of relief.

Paris was her goal, and she had reached it.

Was it the beginning or the end?

"Where can I see you to, Mademoiselle?" asked her companion, folding up the rug that had done her good service on the road, and throwing it over his arm.

Mabel hesitated.

The station clock was striking half-past eleven.

It would be past midnight before her luggage was visited, and delivered over to her. She could not disturb Madame St. Simon at that hour. Meurice's was the only hotel she knew of. Sir John and Lady Stanhope had stopped there when they brought her to Paris.

"To Meurice's hotel, if you please," she said after a moment's reflection.

The two travellers jostled through the crowd, and after the usual delay their respective property was consigned to the barrow of a porter, and wheeled off to the *débarcadère*.

The Frenchman had Mabel's secured on the top of a *fiacre*, and desired a *commissionaire* to take his own portmanteau to a *café* close by the station.

Mabel inferred from this that he was going to accompany her.

"No, Monsieur," she interposed gently, but imperatively. "I cannot suffer you to come so far out of your way at this late hour. I have given you too much trouble already."

"Peste!" exclaimed Roly-poly, "if all trouble were like that, 'Vive la peine!' would be my motto, instead of 'Vive le plaisir!' But if you insist, I must submit. Bon soir, Mademoiselle, and if you should ever want a devoted slave, you will remember, Paul Tourniquet."

"Adieu, Monsieur, et merci mille fois," said Mabel warmly.

The cab rattled away, and left her sometime guardian bowing and bobbing after it on the *trottoir*.

CHAPTER X.

MABEL was landed with her baggage at Meurice's, where her presence created even more surprise than at the Arundel.

She was shown to a handsome apartment on the first floor, and after that unfailing comfort of every true-born Briton, a cup of tea, lay down for the night.

She slept soundly, without awaking once, till the dapper little *bonne* came in with the hot water next morning at eight o'clock.

The young traveller dressed herself, and sat down to her breakfast before a crackling wood fire, in the spacious *salon* adjoining her bed-room.

The excitement and fatigue of the last four days were beginning to tell on her.

Her head ached, and she felt utterly unequal to the least exertion.

"I must go to Madame St. Simon's early," was her reflexion, as she sat sipping her tea.

"Oh dear, how worn out I feel! If I could but lie down, and stay quiet for to-day!"

She pressed her hand to her forehead; it was hot, and her temples throbbed.

The maid came in from the bed-room, and saw her leaning with her arm upon the table, before the untouched meal.

"Mademoiselle has no appetite for her breakfast?" inquired the *soubrette.*

"Thank you, no. I am too tired to eat; you can remove the things."

"Cette petite côtelette a pourtant une mine bien séduisante!" observed the girl pathetically.

Mabel smiled, and declared herself proof against its seductions. She did not care to eat just then, and would ring if she wanted anything.

The maid removed the *déjeûner* reluctantly.

Mabel threw herself on the sofa, and tried to realize her position.

It had never entered into her imagina-

tion that Madame St. Simon would receive her otherwise than graciously, rejoice in her conversion, and give her all the assistance in her power. Pecuniary assistance, Mabel did not want; but of moral help, she was in sore need.

It occurred to her to write to Madame St. Simon, and ask her to come and see her at the hotel. She was so tired and weary, the idea of shaking across the town in a cab made her shudder; but, perhaps, her former school-mistress might resent the request as a liberty.

After all, it did not much signify for one day. It would be better to rest, and not run the risk of knocking herself up completely, and falling ill at Belle-Vue.

Then the recollection of Miss Jones' illness came on her, with its vision of cold, and hunger, and privation of every sort.

Oh no, it would be madness to run such a risk as that. The weather was intensely cold; the snow lay deep on the ground, and the air had that thin, piercing sensation peculiar to Paris cold.

Mabel made up her mind not to stir out till the next day.

The morning past wearily, heavily.

At twelve o'clock, the waiter came to know Mademoiselle's orders for dinner.

"It did not signify," Mademoiselle said, "whatever was convenient; she had no fancy for anything."

The man withdrew, leaving the "Times" and the "Morning Post" on the table beside her.

Mabel took up the "Post," and glanced carelessly along its columns: "Fashionable intelligence. Arrivals in London. Sir John and Lady Stanhope at the Arundel, *en route* to Italy, where her ladyship's health, it was hoped, would derive benefit from the climate."

Mabel let the paper drop from her fingers. Gone to Italy! Gone without a word to her! She might learn it at hazard from a newspaper. It could not be! Yet a moment's reflection told her how probable it was. Probable that her father should have taken Lady Stanhope away at a moment when change was as necessary to mind as to body. Probable, likewise,

that he should have gone without informing her of his departure from Hampshire.

"Henceforth, Mabel Stanhope, you are no child of mine!"

The words rang in her ear like the curse of an evil spirit.

No longer his child! Why should she expect to know whither he bent his steps, or wherefore? What right had she to hope he would take her into his council? Had she not banished herself from his heart and from his hearth?

Down on your knees, Mabel, and quell the storm gathering in your soul!

Did you not know all this, and far more was before you, when you girded on your sword and entered the battle-field of conscience, against love and peace, and every earthly joy?

She walked up and down the room, and took her heart to task for its cowardice. That newspaper paragraph had done more towards making her realize her position than those last four days of action and suffering. She was an alien from her mother; their paths lay henceforth wide apart. Her father might go to

the farthest end of Europe or of Asia, and Mabel need not know it.

He had cut off his right hand, and cast it from him; but the wound had healed on the maimed arm, it seemed, while the cast off hand bled on in its agony.

Well, be it so! she would bind it up as best she could, and in time might perhaps grow callous to the pain.

A stifled sob broke from Mabel as she uttered this brave resolve aloud to herself.

She sat down shivering before the fire. The basket of wood was burned out, and Miss Stanhope rang to have it replenished, The waiter carried it off, and returned presently with a fresh supply, threw several logs on the smouldering embers, and withdrew.

Mabel sat warming herself, and watching the blaze catch block after block of the dry fuel. She remembered that once, on looking over his bill there, her father had made some passing remark on the enormous expense of firing in Paris.

For the first time since she left home, it dawned upon the traveller that as her purse could no longer count on its old

resources, it would be well to draw in the strings a little tightly.

It may seem strange that so obvious a fact should, practically, have escaped her notice so long; yet that it did is equally obvious from the unreflecting way in which she drew on her small stock of money. She had not spent a shilling except on actual necessities; her hotel bill in London and her journey.

The idea that either could have been lessened by any choice or discrimination of hers, never once occurred to her. If the route she came by happened to be the most expensive, she knew of no other; there were more hotels in London than the Arundel, but how was Miss Stanhope to find them out? Then it could not have made much difference. The bill was a mere trifle; she had handed the waiter a five-pound note, and he brought her back a quantity of change. The receipt she left on the table without looking at it; her mind was full of other things, and she had never known from her babyhood upwards, what it was to care about expense. On leaving her father's house,

Mabel had hardly forty pounds in her possession, but she had often been without forty pence, after making a tour of her fashionable *fournisseurs*, and it gave her no more anxiety than when the claret jug on her father's table was emptied of its ruby liquid. There was plenty in the cellar to fill it again. Her purse had its well-stocked cellar to draw upon, and it was none the poorer for being a day empty. But now the cellar was locked; when the wine had run out where was she to get more?

"I was mad to come here!" she exclaimed, looking round the luxurious room, with its hangings of crimson damask, tables and cabinets of buhl.

"I did not ask for such rooms," she added, in vexation, "why did they put me here." There was no use fretting about it now; the thing was done, and she would be wiser another time.

Mabel went to bed early, and rose next day rested, and feeling more like herself. Immediately after breakfast she took a fly at the hotel, and drove to her old home, Belle-Vue.

A new portress received her at the gate. A disappointment to begin with; she had expected a welcoming face, and met a blank one.

"Oui, Madame St. Simon était chez elle."

Mabel went on to the visitors' entrance, and met, not Fanchette, but another strange face.

"Would Mademoiselle give her name?"

Miss Stanhope gave it, and stood waiting in the square *salon*, looking at the lustre she had helped to hang there, and the same drawings that for years had spoken to admiring strangers of the talent of Belle-Vue's pupils, and the success of Belle-Vue's teaching.

The boudoir door opened, and Madame St. Simon, in the identical *tenue* she had worn when Mabel first saw her, came forward to greet her pupil.

"Chère enfant!" she cried, pressing the young girl to her heart, "quelle ravissante surprise; but you are not alone? Where is Sir John, and milady, charmante milady?"

"I am alone, dear Madame St. Simon,"

replied Mabel. "Will you let me come to you, and make my home here?"

"Comment! if I will let you! dear child, my heart is as that of a mother towards you. Come in and tell me all about it; you have some *chagrin*, I can see."

She stroked the fair cheek, that was paler now, but as beautiful as ever, and putting her arm round the young girl, drew her into the boudoir.

How changed life was to Mabel since she stood there last! Nothing in the room was changed, least of all its mistress. Madame St. Simon was just as when we parted with her. The same raven-black hair, drawn tightly back from the cold, sallow brow; the green eyes were as keen and as bright, the trim, linen collar as stiff, the Medusa on the cameo as fierce and stony, the black silk dress as fresh in its rich simplicity, as when Mabel, now nearly four years ago, first stood before the school-mistress in her sanctum sanctorum.

It was not without an effort that Mabel suppressed her emotion; every object in the room brought back the past so vividly,

contrasting it painfully with the present.

She sat down upon the green velvet couch, where she had pleaded for Miss Jones, and pleaded in vain. There seemed no fear of her being repulsed now; Madame St. Simon had been affectionate and tender in her greeting; Mabel had only expected her to be kind.

The school-mistress slipped off the pretty beaver hat, and took the young girl's hand in her own.

"Maintenant!" she said, "faites-moi vos confidences."

And Mabel made them frankly, fearlessly, exaggerating nothing, disguising nothing. She was a Catholic. Her father was naturally incensed at what was little short of a crime in his eyes. Mabel had felt herself compelled to fly from him; he had threatened to banish her if she did not renounce her faith; more in fear of her own weakness than his severity, she had fled. Once the die cast, Sir John would not relent. His daughter must now take the consequences of her act. She had come to Paris with the intention of earning her bread. Would Madame St. Simon

employ her as English teacher, or was Miss Lavinia still at Belle-Vue? No, Miss Lavinia was gone; but there was another in her place, too satisfactory to be dismissed. Mabel should come to Belle-Vue as a guest. Was she not at home there, and welcome to its mistress as the child of her heart?

Mabel was very grateful, but she could not accept the hospitality on those terms. Her purse was badly stored, and she could not look to Sir John for any future allowance.

This, Madame St. Simon pooh-pooh'd as mere *enfantillage.*

Le bon Sir John might be a little *féroce* at first, but he could not live long without his pretty Mabel. He would call her back, and they would live happily ever after. "And papa will be grateful to me for taking care of his pet," was the mental conclusion.

"Alas! I dare not hope it," sighed Mabel. "I have offended my father beyond all chance of forgiveness."

"Then, *chère petite*, why do you not return to the good English Church? *Entre*

nous, what difference does it make, after all?"

Mabel opened her great eyes in mute wonder.

"*Ma foi*, all the churches are good when we obey them," continued the large-minded theologian. "The *bon Dieu* is good. He made me a Catholic and you a Protestant. Why should we not remain as He made us?"

"But if we know that we are wrong, and He gives us light to see the truth?" urged Mabel in growing amazement.

"Where is the truth?" queried Madame St. Simon, with a shrug of her shoulders that said all a Frenchwoman's shrug *can* say. "Pilate asked the question two thousand years ago."

"Yes;" replied Mabel, her face kindling into a fervid glow, "yes, and he turned away without waiting for the answer! Oh, Madame St. Simon, do not think so lightly of that priceless jewel which God has given you. The faith that you prize so little, I would lay down my life rather than forfeit. I have prayed for you, with my whole heart," she continued fervently,

"because, after God, it is to you I owe that blessed gift. It was here, under this roof, that I first began to see the errors of my father's creed, and to divine . . . ."

"I must disclaim your gratitude on that score, my dear," said Madame St. Simon, abruptly cutting her short. "Nothing was farther from me than the wish to shake your religious opinions."

"True," replied Mabel, "yet I must trace the result to you, Madame; it was in the churches of Paris I first imbibed the truths of Catholicity. Had you not allowed me to be there, I should be a Protestant to-day."

"What!" cried Madame St. Simon, her eyes flashing as Mabel had never seen them flash before; "you have said this! you have dared to say that it was under my roof you became a Catholic! you have slandered my house and my name by such a statement! Leave my house this moment, Mademoiselle, and never dare to enter it again! I will write to Sir John Stanhope; I will tell him the share I had in your conversion, and congratulate him on his daughter's turning *esprit fort!*"

"I have done you no wrong, Madame St. Simon," answered Mabel, rising, "I have . . . ."

"Sortez!" cried the Frenchwoman, and with a movement worthy of Roxane, she pointed to the door.

Miss Stanhope bowed haughtily, and scorning any attempted expostulation, left the room.

It was the last time she ever entered it.

To say that Mabel was stunned, would give an imperfect idea of her feelings as the gate of her old school-home closed behind her.

Was Madame St. Simon mad? or was she mad herself? Yes, Mabel certainly was mad the day she counted on Madame St. Simon for one generous emotion—one just, unselfish impulse, one act of womanly kindness, free from the dross of self-interest

It may seem unreasonable that, knowing Madame St. Simon as she did, Mabel should have been so foolish as to count on her for help or protection, when she had nothing but gratitude to offer in return.

But the truth is, Mabel did not know her. She thought the school-mistress selfish and interested to a certain point. She knew her to be unjust when her temper or her avarice got the better of her; but she believed, with the sweet, ingenuous trust of youth, that, whatever her faults might be, "a woman's a woman for a' that."

Madame St. Simon would not see the young girl to whom, for a time, she had stood in the place of mother, alone and friendless in a strange country, without stretching out a hand to help her. She remembered the Frenchwoman's protestations when her "chère Mabel" left Belle-Vue to return home. How she sobbed, pressing her to her heart, and vowing she could not love the *petite* more tenderly if she had been her own child.

All this Mabel thought of many a time, under the chestnut trees at Stanhope Park, when she mused over the future and the resources it held out to her.

But what was Mabel or her happiness to Madame St. Simon now? She was no longer the great heiress of a *milord anglais*. She was a cast-away who might beg her

bread or earn it as she chose. No profit could come of befriending her, and much harm might. If it got abroad that young English girls entrusted to Madame St. Simon's care were allowed to turn Papist in her establishment, what damage it might do *cette chère maison!* If she harboured the renegade, it would be equivalent to pleading guilty to the slander. No, Miss Stanhope might take herself elsewhere; it was no concern of Madame's what she did, or where she went. The girl was headstrong and haughty; Madame St. Simon had been forced to bow before her once; but things were different now.

The fly stopped at the hotel. There were numbers of gentlemen dawdling in and out of the coffee-room, and about the courtyard; more than one on the watch to steal a glimpse of the beautiful English girl, about whom the most romantic stories were current in the house.

Mabel, unconscious of the curiosity she excited, but shrinking with maidenly pride and bashfulness from the looks of too undisguised admiration that were cast on her

by the loungers, walked hastily upstairs to her own apartment.

One thing was now clear to her: she must leave the hotel at once. Where was she to go to? Anywhere fate or Providence led her; but she could not stay here.

The waiter was bringing in her *déjeûner* as she entered the room. In her usual careless way about such sublunary things, Miss Stanhope had said she would breakfast when she returned, probably at twelve.

The *garçon*, seeing the fly drive in, had darted up the back stairs with a tray on his head, laden with good things.

Expense was no object to a young lady who took the best rooms in the hotel, without so much as a question about terms, &c., and the servants were proportionately zealous and respectful.

She sat down to the well-served table, and thought to herself that unless the world came to an end, and so took matters out of her hands, this should be the last meal she partook of there. Her position was growing worse every hour she remained in those costly rooms. Still Mabel

felt neither low-spirited nor frightened; she was gaining strength as difficulties thickened around her.

The first step towards lessening them, was to secure some cheap lodging where she could stay till she found employment, either in giving lessons, or as governess in a family. Where she was to look for either one or the other was yet to be ascertained; but the world was wide, and Paris was before her, and youth, with its fearless trust, promised to smooth all things, and steer her safe to port, despite of shoals and quicksands.

Mabel put on her hat and cloak again, and, this time on foot, sallied out in search of a lodging.

There were several yellow boards up in the neighbourhood of the hotel, but our heroine did not push her search beyond the *concierge's* lodge. The rents were exorbitant.

Suddenly it occurred to her to hunt out Miss Jones. The governess had written several times to Mabel within the last year; not very satisfactorily, for she gave few details concerning herself, beyond saying

she was busily employed giving lessons. She had changed her address twice; the last letter was dated from the Batignolles. Miss Stanhope had no more idea where the Batignolles lay than a Chinaman fresh landed from Kiang-ku; but she was beginning to surmise that walking was less expensive than driving, and economy must be practised in little as well as great things.

She inquired the way at a stationer's, and nothing daunted by the assurance that it was a full hour's walk from where she stood, Mabel set out in the direction given.

She had not proceeded far, when a gentleman, or some one disguised in a gentleman's garb, accosted her with a request to be allowed to escort her. The young girl brushed past him with a gesture of contempt. Undisturbed by the rebuff, the Frenchman kept pace for some minutes beside her. Indignant and confused, Mabel quickened her step nearly to a run, not daring to cast a look on one side or the other.

"*Belle coureuse*, why so cruel?" pleaded her pursuer, bending over the now terri-

fied girl; "why deny me one glance from those glorious orbs, one smile?"

Mabel stopped; they were at the Place du Palais Royal. It was impossible to cross at once, so encumbered was the thoroughfare with omnibuses, cabs, vehicles of every sort.

"Let me steer you through this labyrinth," persisted the gentleman, standing close up to her, and presenting his arm.

Mabel drew back with the pride of all the Stanhopes in her mien, and looked defiantly at the Frenchman.

"Monsieur de Perronville!" she cried, starting in surprise and dismay.

"Himself, and ever at your feet, *belle impitoyable*," he answered, a shade of embarrassment under the dashing impertinence of his manner.

"And Henrietta—and your wife?" cried Mabel, with trembling eagerness.

"Hélas!" murmured the hussar, bending his head, and laying his hand where his heart was supposed to lie, "hélas! elle m'a abandonné!"

Miss Stanhope fixed her full, dark eye

upon the Frenchman, and if scorn had power to wither where it fell, that glance would have withered the face it rested on.

Villain as he was, de Perronville winced under it. He would have attempted some sort of explanation; but Mabel threw open the door of a cab that drew up beside her, and jumping in, desired the man to drive to the Tour St. Jacques.

As they turned into the Rue de Rivoli, she saw M. de Perronville still standing on the foot-path, and apparently waiting for a cab. Mabel drew down the front glass, and cried to the driver, "Aux Batignolles! I will give you double fare if you drive like the wind."

The coachman turned back, and incited by the promise, whipped his lean quadruped into a brisk canter.

Mabel dared not look to see whether she was followed. Owing to the crowd, it was not likely M. de Perronville could succeed in tracing her, if he attempted it, which she feared he would.

"Poor Henrietta! So her romance has ended in misery, her folly in crime!" ex-

claimed Mabel, and tears of pity for her unhappy companion rose to her eyes.

The adventure excited and unnerved her.

What was to become of her if this sort of thing were to be repeated every time she went out?—if she was to be followed and insulted by every ruffian who noticed her? I do believe that if a fairy had dropped down into the cab, and offered Mabel a choice of every gift in her wand, she would have asked for an ugly face and an awkward figure.

But without the malignant touch of the fairy to blight her beauty, Miss Stanhope, with a little experience of life, especially Parisian life, might have partially shielded herself from observation and insult.

She was very, very beautiful, and her dress set off her beauty to its best advantage. She wore the same rich black silk and velvet mantle, with its stylish cut and elegant trimmings, that we saw her equipped in on leaving the Park; the same dainty hat, with its feather drooping coquettishly on her shoulder, and showing the whole contour of the lovely face, the

heavy coils of dark, gold hair, the delicate throat, that glistened like ivory above the black velvet. The gloves, the ruffles peeping from under the sleeves, every detail of her toilet had a *cachet* of distinction and elegance, that might have called attention to even a plain face.

Mabel was perfectly unconscious of any impropriety in her dress. The hat was more suitable than any bonnet she possessed; therefore she wore it. Then, what could be quieter than black?

Reflecting on the singular chance that had discovered to her so unexpectedly, the sad fate of poor Henrietta Wilson, Mabel reached the house she was in search of. It was in a narrow, dirty street, but the place itself was clean and respectable. Miss Stanhope thought it looked neither one or the other, and was distressed to think of Miss Jones being reduced to lodge in such quarters.

The portress was preparing the *déjeûner*, a meal that constitutes the principal event in the day to most matrons of her condition in Paris. The *déjeûner* is always being prepared or being eaten. The porter was

lying in a *Voltaire*, with his legs crossed, reading aloud the *Constitutionnel* for his better half.

"Does Miss Jones live here?" demanded a clear, soft voice at the lodge window.

"Non, 'et le peuple Français ayant à cœur la gloire et—'"

"Pardon," interrupted Mabel, again; "can you tell me where she does live?"

Cerberus, without disturbing his comfortable posture, raised his eyebrows above the newspaper, and so brought his optics on a level with the window. Had they fallen upon a man, or an old woman, or perhaps on any foe less propitiating than the one before him, his answer would have been such as the intruder's impudence deserved; but he was a man, and a Frenchman, *concierge* though he was, and, laying the *Constitutionnel* on his knee, he looked at the fair face, and his brow relaxed.

"Non, ma gentille dame. Miss Jones did live here; but she left us a month ago," he said civilly.

"And she did not leave her address?"

"Non, ma petite dame."

"And how do you manage about her letters?" inquired Mabel.

"Miss Jones never had a letter, but one, all the time she was here. If she expected another, she'd call for it."

This was not very encouraging. Mabel was turning away, when a board against a window looking on the court-yard, attracted her attention.

"You have lodgings to let?" she observed.

"A votre service, Madame, if you would like to see them."

"Are they expensive?" inquired Miss Stanhope, cautiously.

"Bon marché comme l'ennui, et un vrai bijou d'appartement!" affirmed the woman, coming forward with a saucepan in one hand, and a wooden spoon in the other. "Salon, salle-à-manager, chambre-à-coucher, cuisine, anti-chambre, tout complet, cent francs par mois."

Mabel said if it it were not inconvenient, she would like to see the *bijou*.

"Monsieur Grosjean secoues-toi et accompagnes Madame," ordered the lady.

Cerberus put down the *Constitutionnel*,

uncrossed his legs. and begged Mabel to follow him.

The *bijou* was on the third story of a small pavillion situated in the court. Monsieur Grosjean did duty as *concierge* to the front house, and landlord to the back one. The former was let, unfurnished, on long leases; the latter furnished, and by the month. The front house consisted of four stories, and was inhabited, *au premier*, by a Countess, au *deuxième* by a Baronne; *au troisième* by *un ancien militaire;* and *au quatrième* by *un ancien sous-préfet.*

All this, with sundry interesting details on each *locataire*, the *concierge* announced as he led his visitor up the narrow stairs of the Pavillion. It was of little moment to her who lived opposite, but she had an interest in knowing who her immediate neighbours would be in case she became his tenant.

"*Bien sur!*" assented Monsieur Grosjean. "Let Madame be easy on that point," he added with a confidential nod, "she will be *en belle compagnie;* we let in nobody but *du beau monde* here."

They were now at the door of the *troisième*. Monsieur Grosjean took the key from his pocket and opened it.

"Voici l'antichambre!" he announced, as Mabel followed him into the small, dark passage.

"How dark it is!" she exclaimed, not daring to advance, lest she should stumble against her guide.

"Oh no!" protested Cerberus, groping for the handle of the *salle-à-manger* door, "c'est que Madame ne voit pas claire. One has only to open this door, and one sees *à merveille*."

"Voici la salle-à-manger!" he continued, as they entered the small, dark room, with one dismal window, a table in the centre, and four chairs ranged against the wall. "There is the stove, Madame sees; there is not a stove in Paris that draws better; then it can serve as a buffet pour poser la lampe, ou les plats, comme Madame voudra."

"Voici la cuisine!" he went on, opening another door, and bowing to the smutty *fourneau* that was full of ashes since the last tenant's departure.

"Madame sees, there is a window, and a view that is as good as a country house in summer."

Mabel went to the window, and descried above the court-yard wall, the tops of the two lank, snow-sprinkled trees.

"That view," pursued M. Grosjean, "is the delight of all the *locataires*. If Madame saw it in the month of May! Non! c'est par trop délicieux;" and the *concierge* threw up his hands in admiration too great for words.

He called no attention to the dingy *batterie de cuisine*, adorning the smoky wall, and Miss Stanhope asked no questions.

Passing through the *salle-à-manger*, they came again into the antichamber. Cerberus opened a door to the left, and ushered his visitor into a pretty room, with two windows, looking on the yard.

"Et voici le salon!" he exclaimed triumphantly. It was a square room, with gay chintz furniture, and crisp, white muslin window-curtains; a pleasant, cool, little room in the sultry weather, but on

that cold December day, it looked miserably chilly and comfortless.

The shining floor was painfully cold to look at; the polished boards were slippery as ice, and to Mabel's half-frozen feet, they felt as cold. She could not enter into M. Grosjean's admiration, except in as much as the cleanliness was concerned. The place did look freezingly clean, the bleak, white curtains looked frosty and clean, the atmosphere of the house was cleanliness and frost.

However, she must leave the Hôtel Meurice that day, and this was the only lodging she had seen that came at all within her means.

"And the bedroom? You have not shown me the bedroom," she observed to Monsieur Grosjean.

"Madame y est!" replied the *concierge*, with sweeping bow to the door and windows of the little *salon*.

Mabel cast about in vain for some sign of sleeping.

"But this is the *salon*," she said in astonishment.

"Ah, voilà!" and Monsieur Grosjean with

a chuckle of delight, put his finger to his nose, "voilà le secret!"

Pushing aside two chairs that were placed against a folding door opposite the window, he invited Miss Stanhope to turn the handle. Mabel did so, and to her unspeakable surprise, beheld a small iron bed, and in the corner beside it, an iron washing-stand, holding a basin on the top, and a jug suspended between its legs.

"The bed in the cupboard! what a funny idea!" she exclaimed, laughing.

"Pardon, Madame, an alcove is not an *armoire*," corrected Monsieur Grosjean, respectfully, "when Madame shuts the doors, she has her *salon*; when she opens them, Madame has her chambre-à-coucher; rien de plus commode!"

The arrangement struck Mabel as so intensely comical, that she laughed outright.

Monsieur Grosjean hesitated whether he should laugh with her, or get angry; but there was so much child-like mirth in the young girl's face and manner, such a total unconsciousness of any offence taken or

given, that Monsieur Grosjean thought better of it, and laughed too.

"Dame, que voulez-vous?" he said shrugging his shoulders, and lifting his greasy *berette* to scratch his head, "one does what one can. The walls are not made of caouthouc, one cannot stretch them, one must *combiner pour le mieux*."

"It does not much signify," Mabel said, after hearing the many advantages to be found in this particular combination. "I shall have no visitors while I am here. Is this the apartment Miss Jones occupied?"

"Oh! no, Madame; Miss Jones inhabited one of the *chambrettes* off the staircase. There are two *gentilles* little rooms; one for the *bonne* of *au premier*, and one for *au deuxième*. The two first floors have an extra room. Une vraie chambre-à-coucher alors!" he added emphatically.

The information gave Mabel a pang.

It was Belle-Vue over again with poor Miss Jones.

"Madame has no *bonne?*" inquired Grosjean.

"No; I quite forgot that. What am

I to do about it, I wonder? Perhaps you could find me somebody?" She said it with a *naïve* simplicity that amused the *concierge* considerably.

"Que Madame se tranquillise!" he answered, "Madame mon épouse will be happy to do for Madame."

"That will do nicely; she will be kind enough to buy all I want, and to see to the cooking, and so forth."

"Tout ce que Madame voudra!" promised Cerberus, thrusting his hands significantly into his pockets.

The inference was lost on Miss Stanhope. She never even inquired on what terms she was to be done for so obligingly by Madame Grosjean.

"Madame is English," observed the *concierge*, as they groped their way down the steep stairs.

"Yes, and I am Mademoiselle, not Madame."

"Tant mieux, tant mieux pour quelqu'un," exclaimed Monsieur Grosjean, impulsively.

"Can I have my things brought here at once?" she asked when they regained the lodge.

"Oh! non, Mademoiselle, not till to-morrow morning; the chimney-sweepers come *précisément* to-morrow at eight, and it would be impossible for Mademoiselle to be here while they are at work."

This was a disappointment. The delay at Meurice's would entail so much extra expense.

However, there was no help for it.

"Must I see the landlord," she inquired.

"I have the honour of presenting him to Mademoiselle!" replied Monsieur Grosjean, doffing his *berette* before the young lady.

"I am *concierge par devant*," pointing to the large house on the street, "and Monsieur Grosjean, landlord, *par derrière*."

"Then to-morrow at twelve, I become your tenant. You will have a fire in the *salon*, please," she said to "Madame mon épouse," who came forward, wiping the steam and smuts from her face with a *torchon*.

"Mademoiselle need not fear!" she said impressively; "I will do for her as she would do for herself."

"A great deal better, I hope;" rejoined

Mabel; and wishing them good morning, she stepped into the cab, and was soon back in the Rue de Rivoli.

Her bill was brought in by the waiter, with the breakfast next morning.

Apartments, dinners, *déjeûners*, wood, light, and attendance during two days and two nights—two hundred and fifty francs.

Mabel had not the slightest idea whether it was an unreasonable bill or a moderate one. It was a large sum to pay out of her small fund, but she paid it without comment or protest. Her father had paid bills there before, and had not found fault or haggled over the amount; no doubt he considered them just and reasonable.

Mabel counted out her little store of cash, and found her forty pounds had dwindled down to twenty-three pounds and some few shillings.

CHAPTER XI.

COLD, sharp, and bitter was that December morning when Mabel took herself and her belongings from the warm, comfortable hotel to the bleak lodging in the Rue St. Louis. The *concierge* had done her best to make it wear a look of welcome for the young tenant. There was a good fire in the little *salon*, and a *pot-au-feu* simmering in the kitchen. Madame Grosjean thought Mademoiselle would like a *bouillon*.

What a cup of tea is to an Englishwoman, a *bouillon* is to a Frenchwoman.

Mabel thanked her housekeeper for her kindly forethought.

She busied herself for a couple of hours in arranging her clothes in a pretty *meuble* that served as an ornamental cabinet or a clothes-press, according as the room became bed-room or *salon*.

At three o'clock Madame Grosjean came

in to know if Mademoiselle had her own linen and plate?

"Linen and plate!" echoed Mabel in surprise; "Oh, dear no!" She had never thought of such a thing.

"Then would Mademoiselle hire it of Madame Grosjean?"

There was no alternative; towels and table-clothes, and knives and forks, were not luxuries to be dispensed with.

"I shall be obliged if you can supply me with what is necessary, "she answered after a moment's reflexion. "Will it be very expensive?"

"Oh, a mere trifle, Mademoiselle. Monsieur Grosjean is so reasonable. He is like a father to his *locataires*. Mademoiselle will see!"

With this consoling assurance, Madame Grosjean went off to fetch the necessary addition to Mabel's housekeeping.

A small stock of wood was piled up in the *salle-à-manger*. It was the cleanest sort of fuel, and as Mademoiselle was alone she would find it easier to manage a wood fire than any other, prudent Madame Grosjean said.

The first day passed quickly enough, what between the novelty and the busy occupation it induced.

The next morning, Mabel had her *café au lait* comfortably prepared by the landlady, and brought to the *salon*. She made a general sitting-room of it; the dressing-room was like an ice-house, and Miss Stanhope's newly-acquired economy forbade the expense of two fires. Then the room was dingy and dark, and altogether wretched-looking. She sat looking over some books that Dowdy had packed with her things. They were French and German works. As they were on the child's dressing-table, and in a foreign tongue, Dowdy concluded they must have been in frequent use, and were Catholic books, probably prayer-books; so she slipped them in amongst the dresses.

Mabel arranged them on the centre table, put her workbox and some little knick-knacks it contained on a small work-table, and contrived to give the frosty *salon* a look of life and habitation.

The snow had fallen heavily all night. A sleety rain was melting the thick white

carpet, and turning it into a mass of mud and slop. Mabel looked despairingly out of the white-curtained window into the court-yard. There was no possibility of stirring out till the weather cleared.

When she did go out, where was she to go to? Probably to some library; there they would give her some idea of how lessons were to be sought and found. It was terrible to be kept at home idle, when she ought to be out and stirring.

O'Dowd had fortunatsly sent her paint-box with its rich supply of colours and brushes; but Mabel had neither board nor paper, else she might have spent the long, wet day in painting.

This was the resource on which Mabel counted most. Her drawings had been seen by competent judges, who pronounced them full of talent and artistic truth. She remembered how one very distinguished painter, (in his early career, a *protégé* of Sir John's), after bestowing great praise on a copy of one of Canaletti's sea views, exclaimed with sudden impulse: "What a mistake that you should be an heiress instead of an artist! It is a thousand

pities so much talent should be thrown away."

She had laughed at the time, never dreaming in her bright present how the future might give her cause to remember the compliment, and cling to it.

Two days passed, and after a protracted struggle between the rain and the snow, both cleared off, and the sun shone out feebly once more.

On her way out, Mabel asked the *concierge* to direct her to the Rue Royale; once there, she would be at home.

"Ma foi! it's a good long step from this;" observed M. Grosjean, drawing his hand across his mouth, and looking down at his feet; "it's a good step, and in the mud, unless Mademoisnlle has boots as sound as *sabots*, it's a great risk to undertake it."

"I must undertake it, M. Grosjean;" she replied cheerfully, "cabs are too dear; I can't afford them."

"Tenez!" suggested the *concierge*, "why not take the omnibus? It will land you just at the spot."

Drive in an omnibus! the daughter of

Sir John Stanhope! It was almost as funny as the bed in the cupboard.

The suggestion had been given in all kindness and simplicity, without the remotest idea of impertinence. Mabel said nothing in reply, but the slight raising of the dark eye-brows, and almost imperceptible curl of the short upper lip, did not escape the quick eye of the Frenchman.

"Pardon et excuses, Mademoiselle," he said, pulling at the tassel of his oily skull-cap, "but the Batignolles omnibus is *très bien composé*. Miss Jones always took it. Never saw *la bonne mees* put her foot in a cab once during the two months she stayed in my house."

"Oh, I am very much obliged to you," answered Mabel, blushing a conscious avowal of her thoughts. "It was very kind of you to propose the omnibus; but as I have never been in one, I should feel a little frightened. I prefer walking if I can find my way."

"As Mademoiselle likes; but for six *sous* she can ride behind a pair of good horses, with coachman and *valet de pied*, instead of wetting her feet trotting through the mud."

M. Grosjean bowed, and Mabel passed on into the street.

And if Miss Jones travelled in an omnibus, why should she be above doing it?

She would be Mabel Stanhope, if she travelled in a wheel-barrow or a pedlar's cart. She had no position now to uphold or to compromise, and there could be nothing improper in riding in an omnibus, or Miss Jones would not have done it, no matter how urgent her necessities. While Mabel was making the foregoing reflections, the omnibus came rolling down the street. With heroic resolve, she stood till it came within reach, and signed to the coachman to stop. The powerful horses were drawn in with a jerk, and gathering up her skirts as best she could, Mabel picked her steps through the mud, tripping gingerly on the biggest paving stones.

"Allons, dépêchons nous!" grumbled the conductor. The new-comer reached the door; he caught her by the elbow, shoved her in, jerked the check-string, and off went the omnibus, swaying heavily from right to left under the sudden impetus.

Mabel stood, helplessly holding on to the rod above her head. She could see no vacant spot to sit down in.

"Voyons!" cried the conductor, gruffly, "you can't stand here from this to port."

"Then let me down, there is no room for me," she said, looking back imploringly at the man.

"Yes, there is; I wouldn't have picked you up if there wasn't. There is a seat beside *ce Monsieur*," and he pointed to a red-faced man in a blouse, with a large basket on his knee.

"Push on to the seat; it won't walk to you," suggested the conductor, politely.

She did push on, blushing and trembling like a culprit. There were two gentlemen at the entrance of the omnibus, but instead of assisting her in her embarrassment, they seemed to enjoy it. No one made way for her, except the red-faced *monsieur* in the blouse. He swung himself into the end seat, leaving his own to Mabel, and so saving her from facing in full the two long lines of occmpants.

"Cela ne sent pas bon," he said, facetiously, touching his basket, and changing

it to his right knee, so as to bring it farther from his pretty neighbour's nose. It was fish, apparently, and the aroma was not a pleasant addition to Mabel's position. She felt mortified and distressed. Evidently the people were laughing at her; she had no business to come there, they thought. Mabel thought so, herself.

They stared at her so rudely, especially the two well-dressed men at the entrance. The women eyed her suspiciously, whispering to each other, and then looking curiously at her dress. They were a long time jolting over the pavements. Miss Stanhope pulled out her watch, a pretty Geneva one, with her initials glittering in brilliants on the back, and a variety of jewelled what-nots dangling from the chain.

The women nodded to each other knowingly, and the men stared harder than before.

"What a pretty watch!" exclaimed he of the fish-basket, as Mabel slipped the watch into a diminutive pocket at her side. "Too pretty to wear in an omnibus," he added, with an expressive wink.

Mabel looked up at the bluff, honest, face. "I have no other," she answered naïvely.

The omnibus stopped. A crowd of people were pressing round a man with a brass band round his hat; he was dealing out square bits of wood to the assembled multitude.

"Nous y sommes!" cried the red-faced man, gleefully.

Mabel did not stir; every one was gone, or on the move but herself.

"Nous y sommes!" repeated her neighbour, hoisting his basket and waiting for the young lady to proceed.

"Thank you," said Mabel, drawing up her sweeping silk dress, and motioning him to pass out; "I am going on to the Madeleine."

"The Madeleine!" fish-basket lifted his eye-brows to the roots of his hair.

"Yes; does the omnibus not go so far?" she asked with a look of alarm.

"*Si fait*, a great deal farther, in the opposite direction. You have got into the wrong box; we are at Montmartre! Conductor, why did you tell Madame you went to the Madeleine?"

"Who says I told her?" demanded the official indignantly.

"Then you ought to have told her—I mean, that you didn't go. You must take that green one down there, *ma petite dame*," he continued to Mabel, helping her out of the vehicle; "ask for a correspondence, it will take you to the steps of the Madeleine. Another time," he added, good-humouredly, "don't embark without asking where your ship is bound for."

"Why didn't Madame ask?" put in the conductor, anxious to right himself before the crowd, who had overheard the blouse's angry reproof, and stood to hear the issue. "It's not my fault if people can't use their tongue or their eyes; why, it's written on the sides as large as life," he continued with surly pertinacity, "it costs nothing to read it."

Mabel felt called on to say something in self-defence. Everybody was looking at her, and the conductor was talking at the top of his voice.

"I don't know Paris," she said, her cheeks glowing with shame and vexation,

"I thought all the omnibuses went to the Madeleine."

"*Sapristi!*" laughed the conductor, mollified by the ingenuous avowal.

Some of the women tittered contemptuously, as the young girl tried to extricate herself from the gaping crowd.

"This way, Madame," called out one of the gentlemanly men who had come with her from the Batignolles.

There were two omnibuses waiting a little lower down, and the travellers were jostling into them. Mabel had enough of the omnibus for one day. She stepped off the footpath, into the road, but it was no easy matter to cross it. Carts and carriages, in an unbroken stream, were passing up and down.

The gentleman came up to her.

"That omnibus will take you straight to the Madeleine. I am going there," he said, as if to put the fact beyond all doubt, and dispel her hesitation.

"Thank you, I shall walk there," with a slight bow. Mabel moved forward and ventured another step into the gutter.

The stranger raised his hat, and went

back towards the omnibus, but not into it. If Miss Stanhope had been sufficiently self-collected to have thought about it at all, it might have struck her that coming all the way from the Batignolles to Montmartre was rather a round-a-bout road to the Madeleine; but she was too much excited, and too unsophisticated to notice the inconsistency. There seemed no possibility of crossing; what was she to do? "Go in the omnibus!" cried brave common sense, but Mabel was not in the mood to listen to common sense; besides, experience was against it. She walked on a little way in hopes of being able to cross lower down. The first omnibus was moving off.

Several disaffected parties were protesting energetically against the unfairness of the proceeding; they should have been taken up; they had been waiting longer than others; *there* were their numbers.

One voice came clear above the rest. It was neither shriller nor louder than the others; but it had a peculiarly full, distinct tone and a rich, English accent. It was a woman's voice.

"Que voulez-vous, Madame," argued one of the brass-banded individuals; "yours did not answer."

"Pardong, Moshu, I did answer."

"Mais votre numéro ne répondait pas!" insisted the man,

"Mon numéro! ah, je ne comprong pas; c'est un idiôme."

Mabel started. No, she could not be mistaken; that must be Miss Jones. And Miss Jones it surely was.

If an angel had dropped from the skies, neither could have been more overjoyed at the meeting.

"My darling child! Where have you come from? What are you doing here? Why are you alone?" questioned Miss Jones, eagerly.

"Oh, let us take a cab and get home. I'll tell you all, presently."

A *fiacre*, on the look-out for a customer, came sauntering by. Mabel stopped it.

"I am going to the Rue Royale," said Miss Jones, hesitating. "Perhaps you were going in an opposite direction, dear?"

"I wanted to go precisely there," and she jumped in after her friend.

Miss Jones kissed her again and again.

"What a joyful surprise this is, my darling; but tell me all about it. How long have you been here? And how do I happen to find you by yourself?"

Mabel took Miss Jones's hand in her own two, and looked wistfully into the dear, inquiring face. It was paler and thinner; the cheeks had shrunk in, showing the long, projecting teeth more and more.

There was *want* in the lank, flabby jaws; want in the sunken grey eyes that shone out now with a flash of happiness from their cavities circled with black, and telling all too plainly of toil, and pain, and suffering.

Mabel gazed at the face, and burst into tears.

"Mabel, my darling! what is this? What sorrow? Have you lost—?"

She stopped short. No, Mabel was not in mourning. What could it mean?

The young girl sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Oh, don't cast me off! Don't desert me. Dear Miss Jones, have pity on me; be kind to me!"

"Have pity on you!" echoed Miss Jones, mystified and distressed unspeakably. "Mabel, what has happened? Tell me; speak to me; how am I to have pity on you?"

She rocked her in her arms to and fro, as she would have lulled a child to sleep.

Mabel grew calm after a while, and, disengaging herself, looked steadily at Miss Jones.

"Would anything make you cast me off? Is there nothing that would make you turn from me with horror? Do you love me well enough to forgive me any wrong, any sin?"

Miss Jones' pale face turned of an ashy grey. She sat aghast and horror-struck.

"Miss Jones, I am a Catholic!" breathed Mabel, her hands clasped, her lips quivering. A pale red glow shot over the pallid cheek; Miss Jones opened her arms, and Mabel flung herself into them.

"My poor child," the governess said,

after a pause, but still pressing the weeping girl to her heart, "a sorrow that I had never looked for, never dreamt of! Have you left home on account of it?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been here?"

"Only a few days."

Then Mabel gave the history of her conversion, her struggle, and her sacrifice; her flight from Stanhope Park, her arrival in Paris, her disappointments, and her hopes.

"You must tell me where to get lessons," she said, after briefly explaining her resources for the present. "I know nobody in Paris; not a soul. How did you get pupils when you left Belle-Vue?"

"My first was one Monsieur l'Abbé procured for me. He has been a kind friend to me. I wonder it did not occur to you to apply to him?"

"It did occur to me; but, in the first place, I did not know his name, we always called him Monsieur l'Abbé; in the next place, I was not sure whether he was still at Belle-Vue, and if I directed my letter to the

Aumonier, it might have gone to a stranger, or worse, into Madame St. Simon's hands!"

"And you counted on *her* helping you! Surely—but we had better not speak of her. May God forgive her! She is in need of light, poor woman!"

"Not light only, but heart and conscience!" exclaimed Mabel impetuously.

Miss Jones laid a gentle hand on the young girl's arm: "forget her, my child, as I do, and pray for her. But about these lessons; what kind of lessons did you think of giving?"

"Well, painting chiefly. You remember I was first in the *atelier* at Belle-Vue, and I have improved a good deal since I left. Then there is the harp and piano; I think I could conscientiously undertake to teach them; and, of course, English and French. But the drawing lessons would be better paid, I fancy."

"I hope so, dear. The difficulty is, where to find pupils." Miss Jones knew something of it.

"In London, people find them at the libraries. When we were there last season,

Bullfinch recommended an Italian master to mamma, and they spoke so highly of him, that she engaged him at once for two months. Suppose we try first at the libraries?"

Miss Jones knew too well how little was likely to come of the trying, but she had not the heart to say so. After all, this young creature with her beauty and her talent, and her bright hopefulness, might succeed where she had failed. She might awake sympathy in hearts that had been coldly indifferent to suffering in a less attractive form. Her beauty would interest, if nothing else did.

"Well, suppose we try the booksellers;" assented Miss Jones, after some deliberation.

"Can you come with me now?" inquired Mabel.

"I'm afraid not, dear. I have a lesson in the Rue Tronchet. Unless you could wait till it was over; but where could you stay?"

"In the Madeleine!" suggested Mabel brightly. "I've not been into it since I came."

"Nor I, since we were there together. Alas! Mabel, it was in an evil hour you first entered it. I will not reproach you, my poor child; but what a pang this is to me, God only knows!"

"Reproach me! no, you must not. You would not, if you knew what it has cost me. But the prize was worth the struggle, ay, if it lasted to the death!"

The dark eyes shone with a light, radiant and holy, telling of joy deep down within, of hope anchored on a rock, of peace that had come of sacrifice.

It was a sad marvel to Miss Jones, how this spirit so pure and true should have fallen into error and darkness. It might be only as a trial, and to some wise purpose. So prayed the simple-hearted Protestant.

They got down at the Madeleine. Miss Jones went round to her lesson, and Mabel ascended the wide steps of the church. Her heart was lighter than it had been for many a day, and falling reverently on her knees, she lifted up her heart in prayer.

Many minutes had not elapsed, when a

light tap on the shoulder caused her to look up.

It was Miss Jones. Mabel would have preferred waiting a little longer in the church, but she rose at once and followed her friend.

"My pupil was out," said Miss Jones, "so I should have had my hour's walk for nothing, if you had not saved me the journey on foot. It is a lesson lost; however, I don't regret it. We can begin our campaign amongst the booksellers all the sooner."

"How do you mean, a lesson lost? Does your time count for nothing? Surely they would not be so unjust as to bring you out a day like this, and such a long walk for nothing?"

"It seems they wrote last evening," replied Miss Jones, "telling me not to come; but the first delivery is at nine, and I am out since eight, so I missed the letter."

No wonder she looked worn and jaded. Out since eight, with no sustenance but a cup of cold milk and a piece of dry bread.

"Why do you come out so early?" inquired Mabel, "it's hardly light at eight o'clock these dark mornings."

"I have a lesson at half-past eight. It takes me half-an-hour to walk to it from my lodging."

"Where is your lodging, Miss Jones?" asked Mabel.

"Close to where you met me at Montmartre. It's a long way out of town; but it's convenient on account of the omnibuses being so near. I treat myself to a ride now and then," she added, smiling, as if the three-penny ride were a piece of extravagance that required some apology.

Mabel thought it a proof of abnegation that raised Miss Jones higher and higher on her pedestal of heroism.

"How courageous you are, dear Miss Jones," she said, looking up with such evident admiration in her face, that Miss Jones could not help laughing.

"I got into one this morning," Mabel went on to say, "and I thought I should have died before I got out of it. Such a smell! and the people were so rude! They tittered and stared at me as if I had ten heads. Nothing would have induced me to do such a thing, but M. Grosjean told me you often rode in omnibuses, so I knew

there could be nothing improper in it," she added, with a look of inquiry at Miss Jones.

"I'm not sure of that, Mabel; it's very improper to be poor. But how did you happen to see my old friend M. Grosjean this morning?"

"I am his tenant," and Mabel explained how it had all come about.

"They are decent people, as far as I know of them," observed Miss Jones. "I am sorry I did not stay there; sorrier now than ever."

"But can't you come back? If they have no room vacant, you can stay with me. Oh, please come, do; we should be so happy together, and I'm dreadfully lonely all by myself!"

It was hard to resist the pleading of the sweet, upturned face, the warm pressure of the soft little hand.

"My darling, I cannot;" Miss Jones answered regretfully; "I left the Rue St. Louis on account of a lesson I have at half-past eight. I could not possibly continue it at that distance, and

it's a good lesson; fifty francs a month for two hours every day."

"Have you a great many lessons?" asked Mabel.

"Not as many as I should like; but the great point is to have them as much as possible in the same neighbourhood. I have two others at Montmartre, in the afternoon twice a week, and the one I have been to just now."

"Are they all as badly paid as the eight o'clock one?" inquired Mabel.

Miss Jones smiled; a peculiar smile. The wretched pittance was handsome compared with others.

"Poor child, she will find it all out by-and-bye. Let her hope while she may," thought the teacher.

"One of the afternoon lessons is in exchange for a French one," she said, evading Mabel's question about the payment. "I found my French was growing rusty for want of exercise, and while one has the opportunity for improvement, it's a pity not to take advantage of it. Here we are at Grinaldi's. I am to ask for drawing lessons first?"

"Any kind, every kind; but I should prefer pupils for drawing. Landscapes, mind," whispered Mabel, holding close to her *chaperon* as they entered the library.

There were several people there; some peering into the well-stored book-cases along the walls, others looking over books at the counter. Mabel was debating whether any of them were eligible for her requirements.

An old man, seated behind a desk, looked over his spectacles at the two ladies, and laid down his pen. Miss Jones went up to him.

"You have been kind enough to take down my name, as a teacher of English," she said, bending confidentially over the desk. "I shall be much obliged by your doing the same for my young friend. She wishes to find tuitions in painting—water-colours and oils. Are you occasionally applied to for such things?"

"Very frequently by the teachers; seldom or never by the pupils."

A flush of disappointment rose to Mabel's cheek.

"Where do the pupils apply?" asked Miss Jones?"

The white-haired old man looked keenly at the young artist for a moment. He was accustomed to receive applications like the present, every day and all day long, especially from his own countrymen and women; but this was a specimen he had not yet met with. He could hardly believe it possible the young lady before him, with her brilliant beauty, her stately bearing and elegant attire, could be one of the ill-advised adventurers who come swarming over to Paris, day after day, asking for tuitions as if they were as plentiful as flies, and to be had for the asking. He must have misunderstood Miss Jones.

"Is the artist strictly professional, or an amateur?" he questioned diplomatically, looking at the governess.

"I am an amateur," replied Mabel, timidly.

"A very superior one," put in Miss Jones.

"So my friends say," observed Mabel, blushing.

"Have you any specimens that I could see, and judge for myself?" inquired the old gentleman, bluntly.

"No, unfortunately, not one. I left home in a hurry."

Mabel stopped short.

"Then you did a very foolish thing, young lady. You might do a wise one by going home in a greater hurry than you left it."

Miss Jones saw Mabel's lip tremble. "What a brute that man must be!" she thought.

"It was no friend's council that brought you here," continued the brute, talking pointedly at Miss Jones.

"It was necessity brought her," said the governess; "she could not help herself."

"Do you expect she'll help herself better here than at home?" demanded Mr. Grinaldi, querrulously. "It's madness, that's what it is!" and the old gentleman pushed his hand through his hair with a sudden vehemence that sent his spectacles spinning on the desk. "It's worse than madness!" he went on, refixing the glasses on his

nose, "I call it a crying sin. You come flocking over here, to a strange place, amongst strange folk. Perhaps you have friends in Paris? No! of course not. You come over expecting to pick them up in the street; to find pupils waiting for you at the terminus; to have more lessons than you can make time to give; and, instead of this, you find more teachers in the market than learners. By-and-bye comes want and debt, and—well, well, it's no use talking of colours to a blind man. You'll never believe, till you come and see and suffer for yourselves. Why did you not advise this foolish young lady against the step?" he demanded sharply of Miss Jones; "you ought to know something of it by this time."

"I was not aware of her coming," replied Miss Jones, "but she has ten chances of success to one of mine. She is thoroughly competent to teach painting and music, and—"

"So are scores of others," broke in Mr. Grinaldi, impatiently. "Have you ever copied from the old masters?" he asked abruptly of Mabel.

"I have done nothing to speak of in heads," she answered despondingly, "any ability I possess is for landscapes."

The librarian looked at her through his blue spectacles. Although the face was shaded by the Spanish hat, he could see that it was tear-stained. He had meant all he said in kindness. She interested him. Miss Jones was not wrong when she said Mabel had ten chances of success to one of hers. The old man had spoken vehemently, brusquely, precisely because his heart was full of pity. He knew too well what that beautiful girl had in store for her, and it made him wrathful against her, against everybody. The wet eyelashes smote him.

"I dare say you think I'm a brute," he said, very seriously, leaning forward, his arms crossed.

"No; I thank you for telling me the truth."

"Well, that shows you have some common sense; only it doesn't show much sense to cry about it. Tears don't mend matters. Have you copied any Claudes, or Hobemas, or Guyps?"

"Claudes, yes, and Canalettis; very little of any other school."

"Well, just take your paint-box to the Louvre, and set to work on one of the Claudes, whichever you fancy most; and when it's done, bring it to me, and I'll see if we can't sell it for you. As to the lessons—I'm afraid it's a bad case."

"I fear so," assented Mabel, "but if I can find employment in painting, I should infinitely prefer it."

"Well, we'll see. Mind I promise nothing, so don't let that make you rest on your oars. Look about you, and you *may* pick up a lesson. Where have you tried?"

"No place except here. I don't know where to try."

There was something so touching in the simplicity with which she said it, such child-like helplessness, that the old man, in his compassion, waxed wrathful again.

"It's a wonder to me the press doesn't take it up and make an end of it!" he grumbled, and the spectacles narrowly escaped being tilted over a second time. "It's a case for the 'Times' to interfere. What in mercy's name you all come rushing

over here for instead of—why, it would be better for you to stay at home, if you had to take in washing and turn the mangle!"

He rattled his pen in the ink-stand, till the ink squirted up on his hand.

"Suppose you leave me your name and address; not that it's any use as far as the lessons are concerned, but I may as well have it."

Miss Stanhope gave both.

The librarian wrote something on a slip of paper, and handed it to her across the desk.

"Call in there when you happen to be passing by, and say I sent you. Don't expect anything to come of it; but there's no harm in trying. Whatever you do, don't fret," he added emphatically; "faint heart, you know," and with a friendly nod, bade them good morning.

Mabel was first to speak when they found themselves in the street. Miss Jones dreaded the reaction that must ensue from this, her first trial of the reality of governessing. She had expected to find a lesson waiting for her on the counter; perhaps several.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Mabel joyously, "the very thing of all others I should have chosen! To paint away quietly instead of running after those odious lessons. Was it not kind of the old gentleman? I forget what Claudes there are at the Louvre, suppose we turn in and see, Miss Jones?"

"Bless your trusting young spirit!" cried Miss Jones inwardly, "the sky is all blue again."

"My darling, I think we had better not give up the search yet. What is that address Mr. Grinaldi gave you? Girel—It's on the Boulevard, close by; there are quantities of pictures in the windows. We can inquire there at once."

"Inquire about what?"

"About the lessons."

"Where's the good of it? He said I should never find any. Besides, I'd ten thousand times rather have the other. Do please let us go and take a peep at the Claudes!"

How could Miss Jones resist?

They crossed over and entered the Louvre. Artists of all ages and ranks were scat-

tered through the galleries. A motly gathering. Old men, working away, with skilful and experienced hand, unconscious or unmindful of the stragglers who stopped at their shoulder, now and then, to admire or criticize. Young men, plying the brush with the vigour and fire, and daring pride of youth, striving to copy with venturous hand the glories before which, white-haired veterans beside them bowed in humble reverence, "fools rushing in where angels fear to tread."

There were almost as many women as men. A few of them amateurs; one or two young ladies with a mother or governess mounting guard, while they perpetrated some inoffensive libel on one of the master-pieces around.

Mabel cast a greedy eye along the gallery, but there was no time to indulge in picture viewing. They went straight on to the Claudes. She was not long deciding.

"A sea-port at sunset;" a picture full of life and colour. It was a bold deed to attempt, but she felt nerved for anything. It was in her to be an artist; more than one had told her so, and she would set

heart and soul to work, that the promise might be fulfilled.

They stood gazing at the picture with its rich warmth of Italian colouring, the bright sunset kissing the limpid water and the vessels resting in the harbour. What sultry heat breathed out of the canvas!

Miss Jones knew nothing of art, but she felt the beauty of the picture growing on her, looking at it with Mabel, and listening to her impassioned admiration.

"This is what day? The days are all up-side down since I have been in Paris."

"This is Saturday," replied Miss Jones.

"Then I can't begin till Monday. Meanwhile I have to get a canvas and an easel, and .... I wonder do the artists bring their own chairs?"

"We can get all that information from one of the *gardiens*," suggested Miss Jones, "I'll inquire of this one coming down."

"Yes. *Ces dames* should provide their own easels, but there were plenty of chairs at their disposal. Had they presented their ticket of permission? If not, he could

conduct them to the Monsieur who received it."

Mabel looked at Miss Jones for explanation.

"What ticket did Monsieur mean? Their passport?"

"Oh no, that did not authorize them to copy in the gallery;" and he explained the impossibility of proceeding without proper credentials.

It was a check to Mabel's impatience.

The *gardien* assured her it was *l'affaire de deux mots à M. le Directeur;* gave the address and promised her there would be no difficulty about the matter. She could not come on Monday, the gallery was closed; on Tuesday the artists were not allowed to work; Mademoiselle could not begin before Wednesday, so the delay about the ticket was really no delay at all.

The two ladies thanked their informant, and made their exit from the Louvre.

Miss Jones proposed their looking in at Girel's as they had the time, and were not far from it. They found there everything they wanted, easel and canvas.

M. Girel promised to do anything in his

power for a *protégé* of his friend, Mr. Grinaldi. If Mademoiselle wished to exhibit her picture when it was ready, he would be happy to give it the best place in his *montre*. There was to be no question of terms; he was only too happy to oblige Mr. Grinaldi.

Mabel grew elated at every step. She saw in imagination her Claude figuring amongst the collection of pictures in the spacious window; some gems, some horrors.

"I wonder how much I ought to ask for it, Miss Jones?" she said musingly, as they sauntered down the sloppy boulevards.

"We'll see when it is finished, my dear," was the cautious reply.

Still, in spite of her hard-won experience, Miss Jones was letting herself be inoculated with Mabel's sanguine hope. The only two persons they had applied to seemed favourably disposed; they would help her if they could, and apparently they had the means as well as the wish.

Why should not this lovely child succeed where she had failed? What parallel

could be drawn between the two that might reasonably belie Mabel's trust? She was young and beautiful, and rarely gifted. Why might she not swim where Miss Jones had sunk? Miss Jones with her jaded face, her wrinkles, her grey hair, her ungainly figure.

"You will come home and dine with me, Miss Jones?" said Mabel, after they had discussed the probable proceeds of the picture.

"I fear I cannot, my dear," said Miss Jones.

"Oh, but you must! You want to go home and poke over some horrid old lesson. I know you do, but you shan't," and she shook her head, with a pretty gesture of defiance.

Mabel was not far out in her surmise. Miss Jones paid part of her small rent by a nightly English lesson to her landlady. The rent of the room was thirty francs a month, and the lesson made it twenty.

She gave it in the evening to ensure its not being interfered with; but, yielding to Mabel's entreaty, Miss Jones resolved to give a double lesson next day to make up

for this evening's omission. She said nothing to Mabel, but agreed to accompany her.

"Where shall we find a cab?" exclaimed the young girl in dismay, as they came up to the deserted stand.

There seemed little chance of finding one at that hour, it was near six, and a day when none but a duck would have walked if they could help it.

"We had better go to the Madeleine, and wait for the 'bus," proposed Miss Jones

"The 'bus! Do you mean the omnibus? I'd rather swim home," protested Mabel, vehemently. "I told you I was in one this morning, Miss Jones."

"Well, my dear, why should that prevent you going in one this evening?" asked Miss Jones, blandly.

"Because I thought I should have died! The people were so rude. They tittered and would not make room for me. And then there was a man with a fish-basket. Oh!" and Miss Stanhope held her pretty nose in disgust.

"You must not be so dainty, Mabel, if

you want to be economical," reproved the governess, laughing in spite of herself; "and as to the people being rude, I think you must have fancied it, or else—"

"Or else what?"

"Have you no bonnet with you, my dear? That hat is very becoming, but it's perhaps rather remarkable, especially as you are alone."

"I have a bonnet," replied Mabel, "but I wore the hat because I fancied it was less remarkable. Now that you mention it, I don't see other people with hats," and she looked searchingly into the carriages dashing by. There were very few ladies walking, but they all wore bonnets.

"Then, dear, this cloak is rather fine for an omnibus," said Miss Jones, pointing to the shoulder-knots and rich braiding, and the cords and tassels dangling about.

"Well, it's the only thing I have that is warm enough, except a shawl, and a shawl is so awkward when one has to gather up her skirts. I don't see, though, what there is in it to laugh at?" And she looked curiously down at the mantle, and then at Miss Jones.

"My dear, when you want to go in an omnibus, make yourself as plain as possible."

Mabel probably took the word in two senses, as Miss Jones meant it.

"I wish I could!" she answered seriously, "I wish I were as ugly as that old woman!"

The compliment was directed to an old woman frying chestnuts in a corner, and certainly, if Mabel's prayer had been heard, her chance of success would have sunk fifty per cent below Miss Jones's.

"We'll take a cab for to-day," she said presently, "and I must get myself up more becomingly for the 'bus, as you call it, next time."

CHAPTER XII.

THE answer had come to Mabel's application for the ticket, and she sat there, amongst her fellow-labourers, working away, full of courage, and comparatively cheerful.

She had not grown to feel less the separation from her father and mother; they were in heart and mind as much as ever.

It was a great battle to keep the spectre at arm's length, but she had entered on the path of sacrifice, and she would pursue her way courageously, she would not look back once her hand was on the plough, but bravely follow it onwards.

Then, she was not twenty years of age. What does not youth promise in its wild hopefulness? So far things looked less gloomy, Mabel thought. The urgent

difficulty for the present was to find some one who would take an interest in her, and give her an opening.

This she had found. Miss Jones, with her unsanguine views of life and its prospects, even Miss Jones seemed to think Mabel was in a fair way to succeed.

By way of disimproving her appearance, and "getting herself up for the 'bus," as Mabel styled it, she substituted for the beaver hat the green velvet bonnet we saw her hesitate about selecting for her journey. Miss Jones saw it on Sunday when the two friends met by appointment after church, and walked on together to the Rue St. Louis. Miss Jones doubted whether the change was for the better or the worse. If the head was less exposed than in the hat, the bonnet left the face completely unshaded; the soft sea-green shade of the velvet was distractingly becoming, and set off the sunny-tinted hair even more than the black beaver. Miss Jones thought she had never seen anything so lovely, even in a picture.

"She'd be beautiful with a coal-skuttle

on her head!" sighed the governess mentally.

"I'm not going in an omnibus to-day," said Mabel, putting her arm through Miss Jones's, "but I thought a hat would look rather fast in church, so I put on this. Will it do for the 'bus?"

"I suppose it must," Miss Jones answered, resignedly; "only it's a pity to hack it in every day use; I would buy a plain one to save it."

"I can't afford that. I must save the money more than the clothes. A plain one would cost me two guineas, I suppose; this one cost three; Madame Bellerose brought it expressly for me from Paris. I little thought I should wear it here for the first time!"

Miss Jones concluded the bonnet had better be worn, and advised her young friend to wear it at the Louvre instead of the hat, which, for the present, had better lie by.

No adventure broke the monotony of Mabel's work at the Museum for the first fortnight. The artists in her immediate neighbourhood recognised her

by a friendly "*bon jour*" in the morning, and "*bon soir*" when the bell rang them out of the gallery, and the joyous band parted company at the gate below.

A joyous band they were, in spite of the little care fortune seemed to take of them. Their art, even venally served and poorly honoured as it was by many amongst them, kept its votaries in a sort of idealized world, and insensibly led them to think less of the grosser cares of life, teaching them to laugh at Dame Fortune's churlishness, and taking from material privations, from actual poverty a portion of their sting.

The copy was progressing steadily. Not without many a pang of discouragement, a sinking sense of incapability in Mabel's heart.

Miss Jones called for her one afternoon as she sat gloomily before her easel, looking alternately from its unfinished canvas to the original; her cheek resting on her hand, the pallet hanging from her left thumb, the very picture of despondency.

She did not turn round as Miss Jones approached, but sat on, staring and despairing.

Miss Jones laid her two hands on the young girl's shoulder. Mabel started.

"I'm going to scrape it all out!" she exclaimed passionately, falling back in her chair, and looking up at Miss Jones; "it's a botch; it's horrible!"

"I think it admirable;" contradicted Miss Jones, after a moment's scrutiny, bringing all her powers of observation on the copy. "Indeed, Mabel, I do. To be sure, I am no great judge, still I can tell a good thing from a bad. Now, that sea-piece to our right seems to be a very washy concern; the sea is muddy, and, I can't describe it, but the picture seems to me to want air. In your's one feels as if they could breathe the air; it's so transparent, so thin."

Mabel's eye sparkled.

"That is just what I find it is not," she said. Then turning her eye towards the copy Miss Jones alluded to, she saw how thoroughly just was her criticism. Judge or no judge, the word of encouragement raised Mabel's drooping spirits. If Miss Jones was right in one case, why might she not be in the other? Mabel rose, and

viewed her work from the other side of the gallery, first in one light, then in another.

"You have been looking at it so long," said Miss Jones, "that I do believe you are dazed, and can't tell one light or one effect from the other."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Mabel, in a less dissatisfied tone, and putting away her pallet and brushes, prepared to go, although it still wanted half-an-hour of the appointed time.

Resisting all Mabel's entreaties to go home and dine with her, Miss Jones, after walking a short way down the Rue de Rivoli, hailed her friend the *conducteur*, and was soon rolling towards Montmartre.

Mabel sped on her way alone, her dark plaid shawl drawn tightly across her chest with one hand, while in the other she held a roll of music. Miss Jones had particularly impressed on her the advisability of always carrying the said roll of music whenever she went out.

"It will give you a professional air," the governess said, "and account for your walking alone."

Whether it was owing to the professional

badge or not, Mabel could not say, but it certainly seemed to her that since she adopted it, people molested her less frequently. Beyond a passing salutation to her beauty, she was seldom annoyed, and grew daily less frightened at walking alone.

It was a bright, frosty day, and she stepped on briskly, enjoying the exercise after the day's sitting.

In crossing the street, she came right against an individual running to escape a carriage that was bearing down on him. Who should it be but her old acquaintance, Roly-poly.

"Comment!" screamed the little man, in an ecstasy of delight. "But I knew we should meet again; something here told me!" with a thump at his heart that would have satisfied any Insurance Company there was nothing to fear in that region. "Have you forgotten the fatigue of the voyage? But I need not ask," and off came the hat again, bobbing till it nearly touched the ground.

Mabel was glad to see him. Amongst those thousands of fellow-beings who

passed and repassed her on every side, Miss Jones excepted, this was the only face, since she was in Paris, that had met her with a smile of recognition.

"You are still at Meurice's? A charming situation; all your *compatriotes* like this quarter; quite right, quite right; English purses can afford it. I wish mine could," and M. Tourniquet chuckled at the conceit.

"I only stayed there for two days," observed Mabel, and the blood mounted to her face. Was it right to let this well-disposed little man continue to regard her as a person of fortune? If he knew her real position, he might be of use to her; he lived in Paris, and could probably find her some tuitions.

"It was very foolish of me to have gone to Meurice's at all," she continued, trying to speak carelessly, "but it was the only place I knew of. By way of atonement, I am now staying in a lodging at the Batignolles. If you know any one requiring lessons in painting or English, you will do me a great service by recommending me."

She spoke with a desperate effort to appear unembarrassed, and M. Tourniquet was sufficiently observant to detect it. There was some mystery in the way. This was not a professional teacher. Mabel's appearance was too thoroughly at variance with the position; her dress (a Frenchman could appreciate that) was so handsome, handsome to extravagance in a young woman trudging the streets to gain a livelihood by teaching. The diamond-studded watch, the silver-mounted travelling bag; all this he had noticed on the steamboat. Everything about her, from the carved handle of her make-believe umbrella, to the elegantly finished boot, denoted affluence and refinement.

What could bring this lovely, high-born girl—for high-born he felt sure she was—a-governessing in Paris? Perhaps some sentimental *mésaventure?* There was that on Mabel Stanhope's brow that forswore the very shadow of mistrust in her maidenly pride and purity.

Whatever her antecedents might be, she interested M. Tourniquet. He was kind-

hearted, most Frenchmen are, and he would serve her if he could.

"Let me see," he mused, putting his finger on his nose, "Mademoiselle entreprend la tête—les portraits?"

"No, landscapes only; oils and water-colours."

"Oh, that is unfortunate!"

M. Tourniquet would then and there have engaged Miss Stanhope to paint his portrait, had her answer been different.

"We must see about the landscape lessons," he said, cheeringly; "meanwhile, I think I may be able to get you an English one *tout de suite*. When can I have the honour of seeing Mademoiselle?"

"Whenever it is convenient to you," replied Mabel. "If your time is much occupied, it might suit you better for me to call on you; it is a long walk to the Batignolles."

"Not too long to procure me the honour of seeing you, Mademoiselle," and off came the hat again; "but since you give me the choice, I should be the most honoured of men if you would call at my house. I am the busiest man in Paris.

Never a moment to myself. It's quite by miracle that I got out for an hour this afternoon. *Permettez*," and M. Tourniquet, plunging into the depths of half-a-dozen pockets, brought forth a memorandum book as short and fat as himself. "This is my address," he said, extricating a card from the miscellaneous package of letters and bills stuffed under the india-rubber strap. "Any hour from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Any day, including Sunday, I am at home, and *aux ordres de Mademoiselle*."

Mabel took the card, and promised to call very soon.

Roly-poly trotted off, bobbing vigorously, and protesting at the top of his voice that he was the *serviteur dévoué de Mademoiselle*, and the proudest of men if he could oblige her.

"How very good-natured he is," soliloquized Mabel, as the Frenchman disappeared. "So kind on the journey, so ready to assist me now. Let me see where he lives,—Monsieur Tourniquet, Galerie Montpellier, Palais Royal. I'll ask Miss Jones to come with me," and she placed the card carefully in her pocket-book.

It was dismal enough, the little white-curtained *salon*, when Mabel, after her long day's work, came home to the lonely, little dinner. She had been there just a month now, and, simple as her fare had been, the daily draw on her slender purse had told heavily.

With youth's reckless trust in the future, she saw the little store growing daily "small and beautifully less," without much fear or anxiety. The Claude was nearly completed, and Mabel was as certain of selling it as if she had held the price in her hand.

The *concierge* was very civil and attentive, which made the tenant of the *bijou* far less uncomfortable than she might have been. The fire was lighted early and regularly in the *salon*, the breakfast was brought in at eight o'clock to the minute, and the dinner was ready punctually at five, when the young artist returned home.

Mabel dined early, because it made the evening shorter. At nine she was in bed, sometimes before it.

The morning after her meeting with Monsieur Tourniquet, the landlady did not

make her appearance, as usual, to light the fire, and no breakfast came at eight.

Mabel, in some alarm, concluded that Madame Grosjean must be ill. She threw on her shawl, and went down to the lodge.

Monsieur Grosjean was smoking his pipe, lolling back in his *fauteuil*, with a hand in each pocket. He stood up and jerked the tassel of his skull-cap as Mabel put her head in at the window.

"Has anything happened? Is Madame Grosjean ill?" she inquired.

"Oui, Madame mon épouse est souffrante," replied Monsieur Grosjean, putting on as doleful an expression as his greasy, good-humoured face could wear.

"It's nothing serious, I hope," said Mabel concernedly.

"Dieu garde! Dieu garde, Mademoiselle; but you see my wife is a sensitive plant, *comme qui dirait*, and the winter tries her so cruelly. I live in fear and trembling."

"For her, or of her?" thought his tenant.

Madame Grosjean rode the grey mare,

and it was no wonder the easy, lazy husband stood in some awe of his energetic *épouse.*

"It's here," said Monsieur Grosjean, sticking his thumb-nail backwards into his throat.

Mabel was less affected by the information, perhaps, than she ought to have been; but this delicate point of Madame Grosjean's interfered so seriously with her domestic arrangements, that it is not to be wondered if she thought first of that.

"I hope Madame Grosjean will soon be well, again," she said. "Is there any one, meanwhile, who could take her place in my little *ménage.*"

"*Ma foi*, no, Mademoiselle; and I am in despair to think you will be inconvenienced."

"Is there no person in the neighbourhood who would come and light my fire in the morning?" asked Mabel, much nearer to despair than her landlord.

Monsieur Grosjean clutched his *berette*, looked down at his *sabots*, and meditated.

"There is *la mère* Cury; she might give a hand." He let go his skull-cap, and

looked up with the air of a man who had got on the right side of a difficulty, "I will speak to Madame mon épouse!" This was the inevitable solution of all Monsieur Grosjean's puzzles.

Mabel was obliged to content herself with the promise. She tripped back to her room. The *boîte au lait* with its quantum of milk for the morning, was hanging on the nob of her door; the long French loaf was standing against the wall; she took both in, and made her breakfast off the cold collation.

The idea of lighting the fire herself no more occurred to her than it would have occurred to her to slaughter a sheep, if there had been no other way of getting a mutton chop for her dinner.

Before setting out for the Louvre, she wrote a line to Miss Jones, asking her to call for her at the Museum, the first afternoon she had a spare moment.

Monsieur Grosjean kept his word about speaking to his *épouse* on the matter of Mabel's *ménage*.

Madame Grosjean was in bed, with a yellow handkerchief wound, turban-wise,

round her head. Her complaint was a sore throat. In the way of specifics, Madame Grosjean believed in *tisane* and semi-strangulation with a dirty stocking; the dirtier the better.

"*La petite Anglaise* has been down to ask if we could get any body to do for her while you are ailing," began the husband, sitting down by his lady's bed-side, and puffing away at his pipe.

Madame Grosjean grunted—an ambiguous grunt that said neither yes nor no.

"I said I'd see about the *mère* Cury," ventured Monsieur Grosjean, finding no comment was made beyond the grunt.

"You said you'd see about the *mère* Cury, did you?" spoke Madame Grosjean with unmistakeable emphasis.

"I said I'd speak to you first," pointedly observed Monsieur Grosjean, taking the pipe from his mouth, and nodding at his wife.

"You had no business to speak about the *mère* Cury at all," said the *épouse* in a resentful tone. "If it came to her ears that the *petite* wanted her, she'd be in here while you'd light your pipe."

"It would only be while you were a-bed," remarked Monsieur Grosjean, consolingly.

"*Bourrique!*" snapped Madame Grosjean, leaning on her elbow, and peering from under her yellow turban at the offender. "Monsieur Grosjean, I married a *bourrique* the day I married you!"

"*Permettez!*" broke in the *bourrique*, dropping his pipe, and uncrossing his legs.

"Permettez vous-même, bêtat! If the *mère* Cury gets up there, it's mighty likely the *petite* will let her down again when she finds everything was half the price she pays me; not to speak of the fire that's burnt. If you had an eye in your head, Monsieur Grosjean, you'd see the saving it's been to me in the matter of fire, the *petite's ménage*. I've not spent fifty centimes in charcoal since I've been doing for her!"

"*Pardie!* how could I know that?" demanded Monsieur Grosjean, with a mutinous shrug.

"If you had an eye in your head, I say, you might have known it," scolded the thrifty housewife. "You've not seen a

marmite on that hearth this four months past; where did the *pot-au-feu* boil itself, I wonder?"

"You are a *ménagère*, Madame Grosjean!" and the husband threw up his hands in admiration.

"Didn't you know I cooked every bit we eat up there, *chez la petite?*" continued Madame Grosjean, waxing warm with her subject. "*La mère* Cury for soothe! an old *bigotte* that would bargain for her master harder than ———."

A spasmodic twitch in the throat cut short the sentence.

"Le tilleul!" she gasped.

M. Grosjean seized the tumbler beside him, and held it to her lips.

"Do you want to kill me, M. Grosjean?" pursued the lady, when she had recovered her breath, and swallowed a few drops of the specific. "Do you want to get rid of me? If you do, you'd better say so at once," she sobbed.

"Peste et diable!" cried M. Grosjean, pulling his *berette* awry, "You didn't cry fire and murder because a man let an old woman's name slip through his pipe;

making the *cent coups* about nothing! The *petite* must wait till you're up, that's all."

M. Grosjean walked sulkily out of his wife's private den, and ensconced himself in his arm-chair, his feet on the warm ashes of the hearth, where a huge log was smouldering peaceably.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS Jones and Mabel left the Louvre together. It was near five, and quite dark when they gained the Palais Royal.

"What an odd place for a private person to live," remarked Miss Jones, as they turned into the Galerie Montpellier, it's dazzling array of shop-windows already in a blaze of gas-light.

"Number ten. This can't be it. We had better inquire here at this hair-dresser's," suggested Mabel.

Miss Jones went in, and inquired if Monsieur Tourniquet lived there?

"La porte à gauche, au premier," informed the mistress of the counter.

The two friends groped their way up the narrow stairs. A sound of men's loud

laughter came down upon them. Miss Jones stood and listened.

"My dear," she whispered, "suppose you wait in the shop down stairs till I see what sort of a place it is here? I'd rather go in alone first."

"No doubt you would," laughed Mabel, "and if the people are impudent, you'd have all the impudence to youself! But you need have no fear; Roly-poly is the kindest little man you ever spoke to; I am sure he would be hurt if I did not go with you; we had much better go together."

While she was speaking, the door *au premier* opened and three gentlemen came running down the stairs, singing and laughing. Miss Jones was a few steps higher up than Mabel, her face was visible by the light of an oil lamp that flickered over the door above.

The young men stared very unceremoniously as they passed without touching their hats.

Mabel was completely in the dark.

"What a good thing they are gone," she

said, as the door below banged on the noisy exit of the gentlemen.

"Yes, I hope there is no one else there."

Miss Jones rang. The door was opened by a boy in livery.

Opposite the entrance door was another that stood wide open, disclosing a long billiard table with a brilliant gas-light falling on the green cloth. The balls were rolling about, but the player was not visible from where Miss Jones and Mabel stood.

"It can't be here," whispered Mabel, hanging back towards the stairs.

"Madame veut entrer?" said the servant, throwing the door wide open.

"M. Tourniquet?" inquired Miss Jones.

The shadow of a man in shirt sleeves, fell right across the open door-way; he held the billiard cue suspended, in the attitude of one listening.

Miss Jones saw the shadow; Mabel did not.

"Yes, Madame, M. Tourniquet is here. Whom shall I announce?" asked the servant.

"Say that two English ladies wish to see him," answered Mabel.

"Ah, c'est ma petite voyageuse!" cried a voice that Mabel recognized before the speaker had time to give proof personal of his identity.

The figure in shirt sleeves rushed out, cue in hand, and beheld——Miss Jones.

She had pushed Mabel behind her, and stood forward so as to hide her completely from M. Tourniquet.

It was a study for a painter. Roly-poly holding his cue triumphantly aloft, and Miss Jones's gaunt figure petrified with dismay.

Roly-poly lowered his cue, and stood bewildered.

"It is I, Monsieur Tourniquet!" said a silvery voice, and Mabel stepped in front of her dragon.

"A la bonne heure!" ejaculated M. Tourniquet; "entrez, Mesdames, entrez!" and he threw open a door leading out of the billiard-room.

It might have been the *salle-à-manger* of a *café;* in fact, it was a nondescript sort of room. There was a table in the middle, strewed with newspapers and books, and almanacks, railway guides &c.

There were a number of small tables scattered about with cups and glasses on them. A gas-light threw its white glare on the litter all round.

M. Tourniquet did the honours with great cordiality, and seemed totally unconcerned at being found in such a decided *déshabille*. He attempted no apology, but bustled about, placing chairs for his visitors.

"Pray don't take the trouble, Monsieur," said Mabel, "I see you are busy, so I won't detain you a moment. You were kind enough to say there was a lesson in English that you could secure for me."

"Yes, but pray sit down. I am entirely at your orders, Madame and Mademoiselle," he bowed to Miss Jones, and placed a chair beside her, but Miss Jones looked inflexible, and remained standing, as stiff as a *gendarme*, close to her charge.

"It was a lesson *précisément* for myself. Would Mademoiselle accept her humble servant as a pupil?" M. Tourniquet rubbed his hands and chuckled.

"Moshu!" cried Miss Jones, aghast at the audacious proposal.

"I will put myself completely at the orders of my charming *professeur;* terms and time. The evening, between seven and eight, would be the most convenient to me, but I put myself in the hands of Mademoiselle; I will make every sacrifice to prove my *dévouement.*"

M. Tourniquet bowed till his head was on a level with his knees.

Mabel was strongly tempted to laugh outright; there was something irresistibly comical in the notion of her playing professor to Roly-poly, but she looked at Miss Jones and the temptation vanished.

"Come away, my child," said Miss Jones very calmly, and she laid her hand firmly on the young girl's shoulder.

"I don't think I could manage it, M. Tourniquet," observed Mabel, "I am very much obliged to you, but I fear the distance. . . . ."

"Pooh pooh," replied the gentleman, "that is nothing; you can take the omnibus coming and going; the lesson would be worth it," he argued in a confidential

tone. "I say it is for myself, but we should be three—perhaps four, at say, three francs each, eh?"

M. Tourniquet thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaned against the wall.

"Who would the others be?" inquired Mabel.

"*Sapristi!* there would be three *jolis garçons* as you would find in Paris. They have just been in here, rolling the balls yonder, and I was proposing to them our getting up an English class here of an evening; one of them asked if Mademoiselle. . . . ."

"Moshu!" burst out Miss Jones again, this time so vehemently that Moshu could not ignore the interruption.

"Madame!" he rejoined, and turning to Miss Jones awaited her pleasure.

"Vous êtes un homme!" she stopped, every nerve trembling with indignation.

"Dame! oui, et un honnête homme," asserted M. Tourniquet testily.

"I am sure you mean it all in kindness, Monsieur," interposed Mabel, "but a

moment's reflexion will tell you I could not undertake the task."

She spoke very gently, she was pained and mortified; but Mabel Stanhope was too purely, too angelically single-minded to see in the Frenchman's proposal anything worse than an *inconvenance*, a coarse mistake, meant as a good-natured but ignorant expresssion of good-will. So far she was right.

M. Tourniquet had not two ideas beyond making money. He made his by a billiard-table; he would help this pretty girl to make hers by teaching his pupils and customers.

Had there been any ladies amongst them, an instinctive sense of propriety might have led him to prefer them as her pupils; but he had no choice to make, so he offered what he had. He saw that, unconsciously, he had distressed her. She was not angry with him, but she was hurt, evidently.

"I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle. If I have done a *bétise*, I did not intend it. I meant to serve you. If it does not suit, there is no harm done."

He was sincere, and he looked it.

"You meant everything that was kind, and I thank you, Monsieur," said Mabel; but I could not entertain the proposal.

Miss Jones opened the door, and led the young girl out, holding her hand tight, till they stood secure in the gallery below.

Mabel was much less agitated than Miss Jones. In fact, beyond the feeling that she had appeared ungrateful and ungracious to a well-meaning, kind-hearted clown, she saw no cause for agitation at all.

"Let this be a lesson to you, my dear, never to make an acquaintance without an introduction," said Miss Jones, as they passed hurriedly out of the Palais Royal.

"What an absurd idea!" exclaimed Mabel, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Just fancy me holding forth to a class of *jolis garçons* at a billiard-table!"

Miss Jones saw nothing to laugh at. She felt inclined to get angry with Mabel;

it was so unlike her to be frivolous or undignified.

"I'm glad you see it in that light," said the governess, coldly. "I should have expected such an outrage on your dignity would have had a different effect."

"Poor Roly-poly! he no more meant to offend me or my dignity than you do," protested Mabel, trying to speak seriously; "he's the most good-natured goose in creation."

It was quite evident her view of the adventure could go no farther, and Miss Jones did not consider it necessary to enlarge the view. After all, what better safeguard could Mabel have, than this total ignorance of danger that would lead her unmoved through a furnace of temptation, without one throb of fear unnerving her courage, without having the white purity of her spirit tarnished by one breath of vice? Let innocence be her shield; it may prove a safer one than knowledge. "When ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

They walked on together. Mabel did not ask Miss Jones to return with her.

She had no dinner and no fire to offer her. Madame Grosjean's illness had interfered sadly with her *ménage;* for the last two days it had been completely neglected.

Mabel dreaded returning home this evening. It was intensely cold, and the sight of the empty fireplace in the carpetless room was a cheerless welcome to look forward to. She did not tell Miss Jones of her new domestic troubles; it would have distressed the good soul, and mended nothing.

Stopping at a *charcutier's,* she bought a small *pâté* for her dinner.

In passing by the lodge, Mabel stepped in to inquire for Madame Grosjean.

Monsieur Grosjean was in his usual attitude of voluptuous comfort, lying back in his *fauteuil.*

"Mademoiselle is too good," he replied, laying aside his pipe. "My wife is a little better. I hope soon to see her up and about."

"I hope so, too, for her sake, and a little for my own," added Mabel, frankly. "I miss her terribly. It is so cold in my little place without a fire."

"Pauvre demoiselle!" said Monsieur Grosjean, compassionately. "I would go and light it for you, but I dare not leave the lodge without any one to answer. *Tenez*, you could manage it yourself, quite easily. Put plenty of faggots and paper under the wood, and set a match to it. Cela va tout seul!"

"Thank you, I will try," answered Mabel.

She did not feel equal to making the experiment that evening, it seemed such a formidable affair; but next morning she set about it in right earnest. Like most practical essays, it was easier said than done. However, Mabel persevered till she succeeded. When the fire was bright enough, she filled a *bouillotte* with water, and set it down to boil, as a preliminary to a cup of tea. Her small stock of sugar was exhausted, so she put on her bonnet and went down to fetch some. Monsieur Grosjean told her where the grocer lived, and Mabel, after informing him triumphantly that she had made *un feu superbe*, set off to buy the sugar.

The sedentary life she had been leading of late, sitting from nine o'clock to four, without almost moving from her chair, was beginning to tell on the young girl's strength. Added to this, for nearly three days she had lived principally on cold milk and bread. Her head was aching; she had lain in bed half an hour later than usual, and nothing but the strong feeling that work was becoming every day more and more of vital importance, could have given her courage to rise at all. The work, in itself, she enjoyed. It occupied and interested her; it kept her from dwelling exclusively on the terrible storm that had swept over her young life, like some devastating torrent, changing the whole current of her existence.

If true to her standard, Mabel Stanhope fought with unrelenting courage the battle of conscience, let it not be thought that the heart was at peace, that she had grown callous to the consequences of her conversion.

Her soul, calm in the strength of its self-sacrifice, was, indeed, at peace,—"that peace which the world can neither give nor

take away;" but her heart was torn and tortured.

Waking or sleeping her mother's face was before her; the stern features of her father bent upon her as she had seen them last—cold, outraged, unforgiving.

And was it never to change? Was her life to drag on for ever in this wretched struggle for a mouthful of bread?

When her thoughts ran riot somewhat after this fashion, Mabel would most frequently plunge her soul and her sorrows into prayer, or seek, in absorbing work, some diversion from the harrowing subject.

This morning, as she passed out, Monsieur Grosjean was holding his *petit lever* with the cooks of his *locataires*. Some of them had already come back from market, others had just started to lay in the provisions for the day.

"Ma foi, dame Virginie," said Cerberus to the portly cook from *au premier sur la rue*, "that's a handsome bird you've got there. Might a neighbour make bold to ask how much you paid for it?"

"A neighbour like you, yes, and welcome," replied Virginie; and drawing her bird out of the basket where it was partly concealed under a foliage of salad, she held it up by the legs, giving it a somersault on to its back, and punching its fat breast with her knuckles.

"C'est une fameuse bête!" she said, appealing to the assembled cooks.

"What did it cost you?" inquired she of *au deuxième*.

"What do you guess it?"

"Let me feel it, Madame Virginie," requested Nanette, the meek *bonne* of the first floor in the *pavillon*.

"It cost me eight francs, *voilà*," pointing to the item in her account book, "it's marked ten."

"Pas possible!" exclaimed Nanette, nearly dropping the fowl in her astonishment.

Premier and *deuxième* nodded to each other, and smiled.

"The table *chez vous* wouldn't be strong enough to hold a *bête* like that, would it?" demanded *deuxième* sarcastically.

"I don't intend staying up there," said

Nanette, tossing her head in the direction of the *pavillon*. "I just took it *en attendant*. I was never in such a wretched place in my life. You may fancy, mesdames, what I have to put up with, when I tell you that whenever we have *poulet* and *pot-au-feu* (they always go together *là haut*) I have to dine off the *pot-au-feu*, and save the *poulet* for Madame's breakfast next day."

"Quelle barraque de place!" exclaimed *au premier*, throwing up her hands in disgust.

"Dieu! les vilains maîtres!" cried *deuxième*, with pious indignation.

"Why is she *sotte* enough to do it?" observed *au troisième*; "whenever my people tell me to save anything, I turn it sour, or I let the cat get at it."

"L'intelligence est un don de Dieu!" pronounced Monsieur Grosjean, with a significant glance at Nanette the *provinciale*.

"That's a true saying, Monsieur Grosjean" chimed in *deuxième* and *troisième*.

"Yes, you may say it, all of you," and Monsieur Grosjean nodded separately to

the three *artistes* of the front house. "You're not likely to be fooled by masters who don't know how to treat a good *employé*. Just let me have a look at that fowl, dame Virginie. I bought one by way of a treat for Madame Grosjean's *fête* to-morrow; poor soul, it's the only thing that could tempt her to eat a bit. I won't put myself out of conceit with my own bird, by putting it alongside of yours though."

"Faites voir, Monsieur Grosjean, faites voir," urged Virginie encouragingly.

Monsieur Grosjean went to the window, and stretching out to a wire safe perched on the wall, dragged down the fowl for examination. He turned it first on one side, then on the other, bumping it all the while, and inviting *ces dames* to give their opinion.

"It ain't a bad *bête* either," observed Virginie; "how much did it stand you, Monsieur Grosjean?"

"Five francs, fifty, after twenty minutes' stand-up fight for it."

"It's a bargain for that," said *au deuxième*.

"And you say it's Madame Grosjean's *fête* to-morrow," inquired Virginie, looking reflectively from her own bird to the bargain.

"Yes, *voisine*, and I hope you'll all come in and drink her speedy recovery—quite *en famille*, at ten o'clock; I hope Madame Grosjean will be able to sit up a bit; at all events, she'll be happy to have her friends about her."

Monsieur Grosjean tugged at his *berette*.

"Thank you, Monsieur Grosjean, we shall be most happy," answered the *invitées*, in chorus.

"I'll tell you what, Monsieur Grosjean," said Virginie, with the air of one who is going to do a handsome thing and knows it, "I'll just take up that bird of yours and leave mine here as a little *politesse* for Madame Grosjean."

"Oh! Madame Virginie!" cried Cerberus, and his bleared eye twinkled, "vous me touchez jusqu'aux larmes; but I will not abuse your generosity. I know you enjoy a good *poularde* yourself as well as anybody."

"I won't say nay to that," replied Vir-

ginie, jocosely; "but I enjoy the pleasure of doing a civil thing by a friend too, M. Grosjean."

"That you do, Madame Virginie," spoke *au deuxième* approvingly; "but we're not going to be behind hand with you in doing honour to Madame Grosjean's *fête*. Are we Mamselle Sylvie?"

"No, that we aren't!" responded Mamselle Sylvie.

"Well, let's see what we can offer to garnish the *poularde?*"

Mamselle Aspasie of *au deuxième* emptied the contents of her basket on to the table.

"What would you say to a small dish of asparagus?—a real beauty of a bundle! I paid fifteen francs for it at the market; I meant to put it down at eighteen, but I'll do the handsome by the folk upstairs, and let them have it at cost price for sharing it with Madame Grosjean."

"*Mes amis*, it's too much! indeed it is," whimpered M. Grosjean, making a desperate effort to be overcome.

"*I* feel ashamed to offer anything, after *ces dames* behaving so handsome," said

Mademoiselle Sylvie, modestly; "but Madame Grosjean will take the will for the deed, I know her *délicatesse*."

"You may trust to it, Mamselle Sylvie," observed M. Grosjean; "above all presents Madame Grosjean values the kindness of her friends."

"Will you offer her this, not that it's worth much, but it's refreshing, and it will remind her of me to-morrow." Mamselle Sylvie drew forth from the basket a fine melon, and presented it to M. Grosjean.

There was a general cry of surprise and admiration.

"That's what I call a good joke!" said Madame Virginie, rather piqued at being outdone in generosity. "Mamselle Sylvie makes as many apologies as if she were going to bring out an egg or a turnip. This time of year, that melon must have cost at least seven francs?"

"I'm not going to say what it cost," retorted Sylvie, with a scornful toss of her head. "I don't consider that delicate."

"And what are you going to offer Madame Grosjean?" inquired Mamselle Aspasie of Nanette, who had listened

in silence to the foregoing conversation.

She was a young, honest country girl, whom four months' residence in the dishonest atmosphere of the capital had not yet corrupted.

She was puzzled to make out the secret of her sister-cooks' generosity; no doubt there was some understanding between themselves and their masters which enabled them to act so independently. With regard to the extra figures tacked on to their purchases, she was puzzled still more.

"M. Grosjean," said Annette, "my wages don't allow me to be as generous as *ces dames;* but as you say Madame Grosjean looks more to the good will than anything else, I will beg of you to offer her this little trifle for me, and I will ask Madame to give me a bottle of wine to drink Madame Grosjean's health, or a *pot de confiture*, perhaps she would like that better."

Nanette took an old kid glove from some mysterious hiding place in the front of her dress, squeezed a two-franc piece out of the thumb, and presented it to M. Grosjean. That gentleman had sufficiently

recovered himself to be able to rise and resume his station on the hearth.

"Mes amis," he exclaimed, casting a dismayed look on his auditors, "mes amis, have I deserved this? to be offered charity on my own hearth!"

"Fi donc, vilaine provinciale!" screamed Virginie. "How dare you insult, Monsieur Grosjean! Don't you see we only presented him with some *bagatelle* of our master's. The idea of offering him money, as if we were not friends and equals!"

"Petite sotte!" sneered Sylvie, "you'll ask Madame for a *pot de confiture*, will you?" and the three joined in a contemptuous laugh at Nanette.

"*La petite* is from *la province!*" observed Aspasie, tittering.

"Yes," retorted Nanette, roused out of her shyness; "yes, I am from *la province* where it is considered an insult to offer stolen goods to an honest man!"

"Insolente fille!" threatened Virginie, shaking her clenched fist at Nanette, "be off to your garret, and keep a civil tongue in your head, or we'll know the reason why."

The *provinciale* did not wait to be told twice; she betook herself out of the lodge, a wiser, if not a better woman than she had entered it.

Meanwhile Mabel, whose thoughts were intent on other things than her pound of sugar, had, in her abstraction, walked a long way past the grocer's shop. It was half-past nine when she got home. Fully two hours were lost to the Louvre for that day.

Passing by the lodge, she saw several letters on the table. One was addressed in a strong, angular hand that set Mabel's heart beating apace. She stood at the open door, and asked if there were a letter for her.

"No, Mademoiselle," replied M. Grosjean, running his eye over the envelopes.

Of course not; yet a flush of disappointment crimsoned her face.

"Ce sera pour un autre jour, mon enfant!" said the *concierge* kindly.

"Mon enfant!" how the word stabbed her through and through! was she ever to hear it from a parent's lips again?

"Pauvre petite," said one of the cooks,

looking compassionately after the young girl as she crossed the court-yard, "c'est triste de voir cela seule, si jeune, et si jolie!"

The fire burnt cheerily, making the polished floor of the *salon* warm with its reflected blaze. Mabel was loath to leave it. The exertion of lighting it and preparing her breakfast, had fagged her more than seemed warranted by the fatigue of the effort. She was one of those creatures who seem set apart to be ministered to by their fellows; not that she claimed the service, it was tendered willingly, as a matter of right. She was frail, and constitutionally unfitted for much physical exertion; and education and habit had increased her natural incapacity for rough work of any kind. She was totally ignorant of the way to set about it, so that when forced to undertake any task of manual labour, her inexperience, added to an innate repugnance, made the effort doubly irksome.

When Mabel arrived at the Louvre that morning, her hand trembled so that she found it almost impossible to guide her

brush. She tried to steady it by covering a sheet of paper with an array of pothooks and hangers that reminded her of her juvenile feats of caligraphy.

The picture was nearly finished, and this forced loss of time was all the more irritating. One week more of close work and it would be completed.

What would she get for it?

Mabel was frightened at the pertinacity with which the question came constantly recurring to her mind. Was she growing money-loving and venal already? Had poverty so soon made her "of the earth, earthy," and dragged her down to a wretched level of self-interest and sordid calculation? The fear was a vain one. She carried in her heart a talisman that would guard its unblemished purity from every taint of sin or baseness.

The copy had made little additional progress when the bell rang at four o'clock.

The young artist had got her brushes and paints into some confusion, and was a long time setting them right. Her fellow-labourers were all sallying off together, rolling their easels into their appointed

hiding-places, and still Mabel was busy at her paint-box.

"En route, Madame, dépêchons nous!" warned the *gardien*, walking on after the crowd.

At last her implements were in order, and Mabel hurriedly snatched her bonnet and shawl. She was now alone in the gallery. Not so completely alone as she fancied, for a gentleman came suddenly upon her from under one of the crimson *portières* that she had never seen raised before.

The intruder might have been any age, or height, or colour; all Miss Stanhope saw was that he was a gentleman.

"A gentleman." How commonplace the word sounds; yet what wit has ever been able to define it? to translate the strength, and grace, and chivalrous honour concentrated in the name, "a gentleman?" Mabel felt that she was in the presence of one now. She felt it in the low bend of the patrician head, as the stranger, coming brusquely upon her, arrested his step respectfully, while he held aside the red drapery, bowing an apology for his intrusion.

Unconsciously, Mabel answered the bow;

she saw he would not advance without that tacit permission. He let the curtain fall, and passed on, his head still uncovered.

Mabel waited a moment to fasten her shawl, and then rolled her easel down the gallery. The stranger turned round, and walked quickly up to her.

"Allow me, Mademoiselle," he said, raising his hat with one hand, and laying the other on her easel. She let go her hold of it.

There was, in spite of the courtly deference of his manner, a certain shade of authority in it that compelled submission; it said, as plainly as tone and look could say: "This is my duty as a gentleman; you must not oppose it."

On reaching the door of the *chambre de débarras*, as it was called, he turned the easel round to make its entrance more convenient. The light fell upon the canvas; a soft, evening light, that mellowed the fine tones of the colouring, making the picture look what it really lacked but little of being—a master-piece.

The stranger started, looked intently for some seconds at the canvas, and

pushed on the easel to its proper place.

"I thank you," said Mabel, timidly.

"May I venture to ask you a question, Mademoiselle?"

There was a high-bred courtesy in his manner that might have won permission to question a queen.

Mabel bowed.

"Are you studying as an artist, or as an amateur?"

"As an artist."

"You will be a great one!"

He raised his hat, and went back into the Galerie d'Apollon.

"I wonder who he is?" mused Mabel, as the manly figure disappeared through one of the crimson-curtained doors; "probably a prince."

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS JONES called for her young friend one Thursday afternoon, and the two set out together for Mr. Grinaldi's with the precious Claude that was to make their fortune. Mabel positively refused to exhibit it at all, unless Miss Jones promised to come and live with her in the event of its successful sale.

Miss Jones gave the promise the more readily that she feared the time was far off when she would be called on to fulfil it.

Mr. Grinaldi received them with his usual blunt politeness. He was delighted with the picture. He set it standing on a chair, and viewed it from several lights, making a shade with his hand, and fixing his keenest observation on the work.

"A very pretty painting indeed, young lady, a very pretty painting," he repeated and walked leisurely back to his desk.

"And now, let me hear what price you put on it."

"I wanted to ask your advice on that point," she replied; "I have not the least idea how much it may be worth."

"That's not the question. The question is, What will it bring?"

Mabel looked appealingly to Miss Jones.

"I have heard of a good copy bringing a hundred pounds," ventured the governess timidly.

"A hundred fiddlesticks!" snapped Mr. Grinaldi. "Don't let foolish people puff you up with nonsensical expectations," he said, turning to Mabel, "beginners must begin at the beginning, and the beginning of the profits is very small indeed."

"My expectations are in proportion to my merits," observed Mabel, humbly, "that is to say. . . ."

"Preposterously high!" completed the librarian curtly. "It isn't a question of merit, as I said before; if it were . . . but that is not the point. However, I see you are not able to judge for yourself, so I will keep the picture here, and do the best I can with it."

"How very, very kind you are, Monsieur!" exclaimed Mabel impulsively.

"No, Mademoiselle, I'm not. I'll tell you what I am, I'm cross."

"I wish everybody were cross like you!" said the young girl, smiling at the face that wanted to look angry, but could not.

The bright hope shining out of her features chafed him. What business, in the name of the stars, had a creature like this in Paris? Why didn't that old fright teach the child some common sense, and bundle her home to England, instead of talking unmitigated bosh about hundreds of pounds.

"When may I call again?" inquired Mabel.

"Whenever you like."

"I mean when do you think the picture is likely to be sold?"

Mr. Grinaldi flew at his spectacles.

"Did I make any promises as to how or when the picture would be sold?" he demanded wrathfully.

"I merely asked .... I thought ..." stammered Mabel.

"Did I, or did I not, say you were not to count on my selling it all?" and he

brought his arms down upon the desk with a ponderous bang.

"I'm sure you are very kind in taking any trouble about it at all," affirmed Mabel gently.

"A hundred pounds!" he cried, scowling at Miss Jones from under the blue glasses. "Nice nonsense for any one to be filling your head with!"

"No one filled it; I mean Miss Jones didn't," said Mabel, coming to her friend's rescue. "She is the only friend I have, and she is as kind to me as if I were her own child." The tears were rising in spite of her.

"I should be sorry you thought me unwise enough to encourage Miss Stanhope in over-rating the value of her efforts," put in Miss Jones, by way of a peace-offering.

"There you are again! Did I say she over-rated her efforts or her value? Did I speak of efforts at all? I spoke of expectations. Are you living on the expectations?"

"No," Mabel replied, faintly. It had not quite come to that, but it was terribly near it.

"Well, that's something!" grumbled the old man. "How many lessons have you got?"

"None; I devoted all my time to painting."

"My dear young lady," resumed Mr. Grinaldi, in a gentler tone, "it would be cruel kindness to deceive you; but it may be a long time before I find a purchaser for your picture."

Mabel coloured, and then grew pale.

"I may find one to-morrow, but it is very unlikely. I may have to wait months. Meantime, what are you going to do?"

"I must try and get some lessons," she answered despondingly.

"Then lose no time in trying; and remember," he added, holding his hand across the desk, "if I can be of any use to you, you may count upon me."

Mabel took his hand, and a hot tear fell upon it. The librarian felt a disagreeable twinge on the left side.

"Come one of these days," he said, "and see how your Claude goes on."

Mabel moved away without trusting herself to answer. Miss Jones made a re-

spectful bow, which Mr. Grinaldi acknowledged by a surly nod.

Dear, kind Miss Jones, she would have shielded that fair girl in her heart from all the bitter blasts of life; and this short-sighted old gentleman persisted in barking at her as if she were a wolf prowling about a lamb!

With what a crushing sense of disappointment Mabel left the bookseller's! She had entered it with a light step and a buoyant spirit, and now she leaned on Miss Jones, lest her trembling limbs should fail her. She was sick with disappointment.

Where was the use of struggling, if success was so unattainable? She did not want to make a fortune, to live in comfort even. All she asked was to earn her daily bread honestly and humbly; to carry her cross without sinking under it. They said she had talent. Mr. Grinaldi expressed unqualified admiration of her work; yet she might starve while he waited for a purchaser who would turn it into bread! "Vous serez un grand artiste," the princely stranger at the Louvre

had prophesied. Mabel laughed a low, nervous laugh that made Miss Jones start.

"What is it, my darling?"

"We can't come and keep house together just yet," answered Mabel with a forced smile.

"By-and-bye dear, please God; it will all come in good time."

The parts were reversed now. Instead of damping Mabel's over-sanguine hopes, Miss Jones felt it her duty to encourage and revive them. The result of their interview was all the less startling to her, that she had not allowed herself to expect anything very satisfactory from it. Her experience had been so hard, so bitter, so fraught with stinging deceptions on all sides, that she never dared look long at the bright side of the future. Still she realized with acute sympathy the pang this disappointment was to the young girl beside her.

"After all, my child, it is only what I expected," she observed cheerfully. "Remember how I warned you not to be too sanguine about the immediate sale. I am sure Mr. Grinaldi will do his best to

find a buyer for it. He admired it very much himself, and no doubt everybody else will. But what do you say about the lessons?"

"Where am I to find any?" asked Mabel; "he was not very encouraging about it last time, nor indeed this time either."

"Still there are lessons to be had; you have as good a chance of finding one as another."

"What's that?" interrupted Mabel, stopping before a stationer's shop. There was a printed placard in the window, bearing the following announcement: "Lessons in music by a pupil of the Conservatoire and Mr. Herz, one franc, at the pupil's residence."

"Suppose we go in and leave your address?" suggested Miss Jones.

Mabel turned the handle of the door and walked in.

"I am looking for pupils in English and drawing," she said to the presiding deity, a *piquante*-looking young woman in a cap beribboned within an inch of its life.

"I see you are kind enough to lend

your assistance to teachers in search of pupils; may I ask you to take down my address?"

"Avec infiniment de plaisir, Mademoiselle."

The *papetière* dipped her pen in a silver ink-stand, and held it daintily over an open address-book, awaiting her applicant's dictation.

"Do you think it likely I may find any pupils through your recommendation?" inquired Mabel, when the address was written.

"It's not impossible!" replied the lady-stationer; "but you see, Mademoiselle, there are so many wanting to teach."

"And not so many wanting to learn," added Mabel.

"Yes, likewise many wanting to learn; but most people, now-a-days, prefer taking *bonnes* for their children, or else sending them to Cours; les institutrices ne sont plus à la mode, voyez-vous."

The necessity that made *institutrices* was, nevertheless, as strong as ever; poverty does not go out of fashion, thought Mabel.

"Have you been to the agents?" in-

quired the shop-keeper, with an expression of kindly interest.

"No," answered Miss Jones, speaking for the first time, "Mademoiselle has not, but I have repeatedly, on my own account. I might be more fortunate on my friend's."

"Mon Dieu, oui," acquiesced the Frenchwoman, with a candour more encouraging to Mabel than flattering to Miss Jones. "I would certainly advise Mademoiselle to try the agents. Madame Pizalet is the most *répandue;* have *ces dames* got her address?"

"Yes, thank you," replied Miss Jones; "I have been there twice."

"Allons, mesdames, bonne chance!" said the *papetière,* as she wished them good-bye.

"Can you come with me now to this Madame Pizalet?" asked Mabel. She would have gone to Cochin-China as readily, had there been a lesson at the journey's end.

"Yes, dear," replied the governess, "I can go anywhere you like for the next two hours."

The agent lived in the Rue St. Honoré; they found her at home.

Madame Pizalet was a woman between forty and fifty. She had never been married, but adopted the Madame "*pour se poser un peu*," she said, and the public in courtesy allowed her to *poser* herself.

She lived on a fourth story, and received her visitors in a small room, with green curtains, a green cloth upon the table, and a high, legal-looking chest of drawers. The room was called the *cabinet d'études;* though what *études* were carried on there, it might have puzzled Madame Pizalet to define; unless, perhaps, psychological studies on the battle of life, the mutability of human things, and the shallowness of human hopes, which the agent might have indulged in to her heart's content. Her visitors to-day afforded theme for such reflexions, had she been in a mood to make them.

"La bonne Miss!" exclaimed Madame Pizalet, from behind her green-baize table, "how contrary things will be in this world! I am always thinking and speaking of you, and proposing you to my *clientèle*, and everyone knows it is large enough; well, nothing comes of it. I can't make it out."

"It's something to have kind thoughts and wishes," replied Miss Jones, good-humouredly, "but I trust something more substantial may come of them for my young friend. Permettez-moi de vous introduire; Miss Stanhope, Madame Pizalet."

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, Mademoiselle," and the agent bowed condescendingly to the daughter of Sir John Stanhope.

"Mademoiselle wishes to give lessons in painting principally, but she is quite competent to teach music, French, and English," said Miss Jones.

"Bravo! bravo!" applauded Madame Pizalet, as the governess brought the list of Mabel's accomplishments; "and Mademoiselle wishes to place herself in a family?"

"I should prefer finding employment in tuition," answered Mabel, rather abashed by the patronizing air of the agent.

"What a misfortune!" exclaimed the latter, clasping her hands. "I gave away this morning just the very thing that would have suited you. Four hours a day in a rich Russian family, to instruct a little girl in painting and English."

An exclamation of disappointment broke from Mabel. Miss Jones made no remark; she remembered that on the occasion of her two former visits, Madame Pizalet had expressed similar distress at Miss Jones's being a day too late for an excellent lesson — "une chose tout-à-fait exceptionnelle."

"There is nothing on your list, now, likely to suit?" asked the governess.

"*Voyons!*" the agent put her pencil to her nose and meditated.

"A lady came yesterday, and asked me for *une personne très distinguée* to give lessons to an artist, or to translate, in fact I do not quite remember what the requirements were, only she held to its being *une personne distinguée*. I think Mademoiselle will satisfy the most exacting taste on that score," and Madame Pizalet bowed a compliment to the high-bred grace of Mabel's bearing and manner.

"Is the artist her husband?" inquired Miss Jones.

"She did not say; I rather fancy her son."

"Then I fear Mademoiselle would be

too young," remarked Miss Jones hesitatingly.

Madame Pizalet shrugged her shoulders.

"*Ma foi*, where one has to work, one must not be too *difficile*. A lesson to a young man or an old one is paid the same. There is not such a choice, that one can afford to be particular. At all events, you can try; if it does not succeed, it costs nothing."

"Just so," assented Mabel, "then pray let me have the address."

Madame Pizalet wrote it on the reverse of one of her own cards, "Monsieur Avenel, 3, Rue St. Nicolas," and handed it to Miss Stanhope.

"How much am I in your debt, Madame?" inquired the young lady, rising.

"Five francs, Mademoiselle. In case you obtain a situation or tuitions through my agency, the commission is five per cent."

Mabel laid her fee on the table, and wishing Madame Pizalet good morning, withdrew.

"Va pour la Rue St. Nicolas!" she

said as they passed out of the *porte cochère*.

"Suppose, dear, you let me go first and ascertain what sort of people they are?" proposed Miss Jones, standing still and looking very much perplexed.

"My dear friend," remonstrated Mabel, speaking with gentle firmness, "you forget that it is an unlooked for blessing that I should have you here to share my burthens, and help me with your love and your protection. I must not throw the lion's share of the worry to you. We may be thrust still wider apart one of these days, and I had better learn to fight my battles alone."

Miss Jones felt that she was right. It was gall and wormwood to her to see Mabel engaged in such a fight as this; the coarse rough tug of material warfare, fighting against humiliation and poverty; a hideous fight. It seemed well enough for such as herself to endure it, but Miss Jones writhed to see Mabel wrestling in the ugly battle. Still she felt the truth of the young girl's reply: she must learn to stand alone.

"You are right, my child," she answered.

Mabel talked all the way; nonsense for the most part; but it was better to keep chattering like a parrot than to leave herself and Miss Jones to their thoughts. She stopped occasionally at a shop window, making remarks on the pretty things arranged in them, turning the passers-by into fun; anything rather than be silent.

They came to No. 3 Rue St. Nicolas.

"Is Madame Avenel *chez elle?*" asked Mabel at the lodge.

"Monsieür Avenel," corrected the porter, "au cinquième, la porte à gauche."

Mabel walked bravely up the stairs, Miss Jones following.

They were shown at once into the artist's studio, a large room lighted from the top.

M. Avenel, attired in a blouse, was working busily at a full length picture, apparently a portrait. Standing against the wall was an unfinished picture, representing Joan of Arc at the coronation of the king.

"Monsieur Avenel?" said Miss Jones, addressing the gentleman.

He rose, pallet in hand.

"A votre service, Madame," and he placed two chairs for his visitors.

"Your wife, or some member of your family, has been seeking for a professor of English," spoke Miss Jones.

"I have been looking for one *myself*," corrected the gentleman.

"Then I fear we have intruded upon you needlessly." Miss Jones rose abruptly, and unconsciously drew a step nearer to Mabel.

"Who gave you my address, *mesdames?*" inquired the artist, looking from Miss Jones to her companion.

"Madame Pizalet," replied the governess.

"Ah, I spoke to her yesterday; I didn't expect she'd remember it ten minutes afterwards. C'est une blague, que Madame Pizalet."

M. Avenel beat time with his brush against his pallet.

"But one need not refuse holy water because the devil brings it;" he drew a

three-legged stool towards him and sat down.

"Which of these ladies did Madame Pizalet destine to be my instructress?" was his cool inquiry.

"Moshu," said Miss Jones, there is evidently some mistake, some *malontondou*, my friend wished to give lessons in English, and Madame Pizalet told us a lady of your name had called on her to ask for a teacher; she could not say whether it was for the lady's father or husband the lessons were wanted. I thought it unlikely my friend could supply the demand, but Madame Pizalet urged us to call and hear the particulars."

"Madame Pizalet is a humbug," repeated the gentleman, crossing his legs with provoking coolness. "She thought it might have scandalized a *jeune et joli fille* to propose her giving lessons to a *garçon jeune et . . . . joli?* Mademoiselle must decide. But 'honi soit qui mal y pense,' as your British Lion says. Why should the idiotic prejudices of a degenerate age stand between enterprise and success? *I* would as soon take the por-

trait of a kangaroo or a Hottentot as I would the portrait of a prince, for the matter of that!"

"I don't see that it makes a parallel case," observed Miss Jones, sententiously.

There was no use assuming an air of outraged dignity in answer to such absurdity, coupled as it was with imperturbable *sang-froid.*

"He is either a great knave or a great fool," thought Miss Jones.

"The fact is," resumed M. Avenel, caressing the black bush under his chin, "I don't so much want lessons as some one to translate. But pray be seated, *mesdames.*"

It seemed to dawn on him that it was rather incongruous for the host to remain seated while his visitors were standing.

Mabel sat down, partly from curiosity, partly because she was weary and very tired. Miss Jones sat down, too.

"Was it a book you wished to have translated?" inquired Mabel, speaking for the first time.

"A book!" echoed the artist, arching his straight, black eyebrows till they

looked like two leeches coiled over his eyes. "No, Mademoiselle, I don't practise literature. They say that poetry and painting are twin sisters; but if they are, they are so *diablement jalouses* of each other, that it is better for both they should live and die apart. The translation I want is to be done *viva voce.* Art is passing through a crisis," continued the gentleman; "we are in an age of quacks, and the greatest quack of the day is Madame Pizalet. Had she told you . . . ."

"Moshu," broke in Miss Jones, "if you wish my friend to write out any translation . . . ."

"Speak out translations," corrected Monsieur Avenel. "As I said, the greatest humbug of the day is Madame Pizalet; next to her, photography."

"He's decidedly a fool," soliloquized Miss Jones. "Ensuite, Moshu," she said, aloud.

"I am an artist, *mesdames*, and proud and fond of my art; but art does not pay the baker, and humbug does. I am driven to do a little humbug in self-defence." He threw aside his pallet, rose,

and opened a door close at hand. "This," he said, pointing to the room within, "this is the prose of my life, and this the poetry," indicating the pictures scattered through the studio in various states of progress. "I am an artist *ici*, *un charlatan là*. The crowd come to the *charlatan*, the few to the artist."

He closed the door of the humbug department, and walked back to his three-legged stool.

"Foremost amongst the worshippers of humbug are the Americans and the English."

"Moshu!" cried Miss Jones, "vous voulez nous insoulter!"

"Pas le moins du monde," replied the gentleman, with unruffled equanimity. "Well, Mademoiselle," turning to Mabel, "when people come to pay for humbug, they like to have their say about it. Now, when they say it in English, I can't answer them; and I want some one to come here for a few hours every day, and speak English for me. Comprenez-vous?"

"Yes," replied Miss Stanhope, rising;

"yes, I understand you. The position would not suit me."

Her wounded delicacy sent the hot blood coursing to her cheeks; she looked beautiful beyond expression.

"Sit for my 'Joan of Arc,' and name your own price," cried Monsieur Avenel, impetuously.

Mabel's eye flashed haughtily. She made no answer, but turned the handle in the door, and walked out, leaving Miss Jones to deal with the artist.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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